Bunga Sen Memorial Library
NAINI TAL
Class no. 940-45
Book no. D54 F
Reg no. 5039

THE FLEETS BEHIND THE FLEET

REYNOLDS
CIRCULATING LIBRARY.
No. 267

THE FLEETS BEHIND THE FLEET

THE WORK OF
THE MERCHANT SEAMEN
AND FISHERMEN
IN THE WAR

BY

W. MACNEILE DIXON

PROFESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
AUTHOR OF "THE BRITISH NAVY AT WAR"

WITH MAPS AND APPENDICES

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

Durga Sah Municipal Library,
Naini Tal.
दुर्गासाह म्युनिसिपल लाइब्रेरी
नैनीताल
Class No, (विभाग) 410.45
Book No, (पुस्तक) 254 E
Received On. 8/2/1953

(2)

NOTE

NEEDLESS to say, many of the most interesting exploits of our merchant sailors and fishermen must for the present remain behind the veil, but, if the Fates permit, the author hopes at a later date to enlarge the book so as to make it a worthier record of their unrivalled doings. He would therefore be grateful to any correspondents who cared to send him any account of seafaring experiences during the war likely to contribute to that end. He desires also to take advantage of this opportunity of returning thanks to those correspondents who have already taken a friendly interest in the undertaking, and of expressing his obligations to several anonymous writers from whose articles in the press he has drawn some of the passages here quoted.

W. M. D.

CONTENTS

PAGE

OLD SAILORS 9

A MARITIME NATION 14

THE KEYSTONE OF THE ARCH . . 26

SEA WARFARE: THE NEW STYLE . 46

THE MINE-FISHERS 71

THE SEA TRAFFICKERS 94

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF THE LOSSES SUSTAINED BY NEUTRALS FROM AUGUST 8TH, 1914, TO APRIL 26TH, 1917. 129

APPENDIX B

PAGE

IMPORTS DURING THE WAR . . . 130

APPENDIX C

STRENGTH OF THE ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE ON THE 1ST OF JANUARY 1914 . . 131

APPENDIX D

VALUE OF IMPORTS FOR HOME CONSUMPTION AND EXPORTS OF HOME PRODUCE . 131

APPENDIX E

FIRING ON SURVIVORS IN BOATS . . 132

THE FLEETS BEHIND THE FLEET

OLD SAILORS

With many an old Sailor, on many an old ship,
Who hoisted out many a barrel on to many an old slip,
And went below to his hammock or to a can of flip
Like an old Sailor of the Queen's
And the Queen's old Sailor.

With many an old brave captain we shall never know,
Who walked the decks under the colours when the winds did blow,
And made the planks red with his blood before they carried him below
Like an old Sailor of the Queen's
And the Queen's old Sailor.

And in Davy Jones's Taverns may they sit at ease,
With their old tarpaulin aprons over their old knees,
Singing their old sea ballads and yarning of the seas
Like good old Sailors of the Queen's
And the Queen's old Sailors.

From *A Sailor's Garland*,
edited by JOHN MASEFIELD.

WHAT follows is not written to praise our merchant sailors and fishermen. They are

indeed worthy of all praise. But we looked for nothing else than that they would in every circumstance of trial and danger show themselves to be what they are, peerless. At what date or on what occasion in their history have they failed? From a fierier ordeal a firmer courage and a harder resolution have emerged, as we believed they would. Of this the world is already very well aware. Their friends know it and their foes. What remains then is not to praise them but to instruct ourselves. Our vision has been limited. We knew that in the Navy lay our strength, but in our thoughts we defined it as the Royal Navy. Till these troubled years the Merchant Service had for many Englishmen only a shadowy existence. For the first time it has come acutely home to us that "the sea is all one, the navy is all one." That ships are Britain's treasury, her shipping trade her most vital industry, her seafaring population her unique possession, the sea itself her partner in her national fortunes, and her merchant sailors the builders of her empire, have been facts manifest enough to others, perceived perhaps by Britons in moments of

reflection, but how rarely mirrored in the full light of national consciousness.

> Thy story, thy glory,
> The very fame of thee,
> It rose not, it grows not,
> It comes not, save by sea.

Let it not be said that we shall do justice to our merchant sailors and fishermen when the history of their doings in these days comes to be written. It will never be written. And for several good and sufficient reasons. Battles on sea or land may be described, great moments in the dreary annals of war. In armies masses of men, in fleets numbers of ships act together, and some picture of the great assault or the heroic defence can be painted in broad outlines. But the ships of the merchant service are solitary wayfarers, scattered units in a waste of waters. The adventures of a thousand ships, the deeds of a thousand skippers, how are these to be set forth in a convenient handbook? On each the sleepless watch, on each the long anxious hours, and for how many of them the same tragic disaster? One record is like another record; one story like another story. And as for their deeds they differ hardly at all.

If to meet the crisis as it should be met, with perfect skill and perfect devotion to duty, be heroism, then all are heroes. A hero to-day has for his Valhalla a newspaper paragraph. Many good men have walked the earth, as many good sailors have sailed the sea, without so much. Men do not always fight and die in the light, and legions of shining acts must remain unsung. With the best will in the world you cannot number the brave men in the world, nor make your battle canvas as huge as you please will you find room in it for all the gallant faces. If it be sad to think that they will be forgotten, it is inspiring to think they are so many. Because courage and resource and determination are everywhere, a single scene or act is nowhere elevated above the rest. The unit is merged in the magnificent total. You will say they form a wonderful series. It is indisputable, but the historian cannot unify such a series or do justice to the individuals who form it. Not this or that exceptional act which chance reveals, but the compact body of its achievement, the pluck, the unshaken heart of the whole service is the impressive thing. So we may put aside

the hope that the future will help us better than the present to appreciate the "captains courageous" who in our time have upheld the long incomparable tradition of British seamen and seamanship. Yet if Britain be persuaded by their deeds to do justice to their successors, which will be nothing more than to do justice to herself, we may believe that even though unrecorded nothing has been lost. In the temple or cathedral or national monument one does not count less essential or less worthy the stones that are hid from view.

A MARITIME NATION

I built the ships and I sailed the ships, and they lie in my
havens fair,
With the sea-god's salt on their crusted plates, and the
green of the sea-nymph's hair ;
I built the ships and I sailed the ships, on the slack and
the flowing tide ;
Will ye match my skill in the hulls I build on the narrow
seas or wide ?
Will ye match my men from the oceans five, or better the
work of their hands
From the books that are writ or the tales that are told, the
tales of the hundred lands ?

CEASE to think of Britain's naval power in terms of battleships and cruisers and you begin to understand it. Think of it rather in terms of trade routes and navigation, of ship and dockyards, of busy ports and harbours, of a deeply indented coast-line, 7000 miles in length; of great rivers flowing into wide estuaries; of liners and tramps; weatherly east coast trawlers and burly Penzance luggers; of ancient fishing villages looking out from every bay and rocky inlet.

Built by nature to be the home of a maritime people, inhabited by the descendants of seafaring races, accessible only from other lands by water, every stone in British history is fitted into a geographical foundation. Not many of us know it, but we are none the less children of the sea and live by it. We are its captives and masters, imprisoned by it and forcing it to serve our needs. In the language daily on our lips are phrases salt as the ocean itself—we "make headway" and "weather a difficulty"; we are "taken aback," or "out of soundings," or have "the wind taken out of our sails," or discern "rocks ahead," or find "another shot in the locker." To the people who made this language the sea has been the "nursing-mother." View it thus, and the Royal Navy becomes no more than a symbol, the expression of a peculiar national life. Science may think of it as the tough exterior hide, the armour, like that of the dinosaurus, with which nature in the process of evolution provides her mightiest creatures. It is, in fact, simply the glittering shaft on the string of a powerful bow, the power is in the bow and not the arrow. Anyone can see that the mere possession of

a fleet cannot bestow naval power. The Royal Navy occupies indeed to-day the centre of the picture, yet without the vast and supporting background of arsenals, building-yards, docks, harbours, bases, a fleet is nothing. Behind it lives, moves, and has its being the great maritime nation—an organisation of extreme complexity, with its coal and iron mines, its manufactories, its endless machinery and, far above all, its age-long tradition and experience of the sea.

View it historically, and the Royal Navy is the heir of the Merchant Service, the inheritor of its fighting spirit and tradition. Not till Victoria's reign was any clear line of division drawn between the merchant sailor and the man-of-war's-man. Both stood together in the nation's first line of defence during the critical moments of its history, when Philip planned his great *coup*, and Napoleon bestrode the world like a Colossus. And now that the fiery wheel of fate has revolved once more and swept the peoples into the maelstrom of war, history repeats itself, and the mariners of England from the merchant and fishing fleets are fighting men once more as in the old and famous days.

Histories, as they have too often been written, obscure the vision and provide a false perspective. Faithful chronicles no doubt of the red-letter days of battle, but how few and far between were the battles in our long naval wars! Too often the histories speak of the Navy as if it were a thing apart, a mere fighting instrument, and forget to tell us of the fleets behind the fleet; of the merchant sailors and the fishermen, the pioneers and the builders of our sea-supported confederacy.

These "traders," it was said of the Elizabethan seamen, "escaped the notice of kings and chroniclers." Nevertheless it was these men who saved England and America from becoming provinces of Spain. We Englishmen forget, if we have ever considered and known, that in all her naval enterprises, and they have not been few, the country invariably called upon her merchantmen and fisher folk, upon all her resources in men and ships. The "navy," as we call it, what has history to say of it? That until the reign of Henry VIII., the pious founder of the Royal Navy, it was, in fact, neither more nor less than England's mercantile marine. As

for Elizabeth's tall ships and proud captains, Drake and Hawkins and Frobisher and many another, they were stout merchant skippers, and of the fleet which met the Great Armada, near upon two hundred sail, but thirty-four belonged to the Queen's Navy. In that expedition to Cadiz, too, which singed the whiskers of His Majesty of Spain, not more than five or six in a fleet of forty vessels were men-of-war. In its palmy days the Merchant Navy was accustomed and very well able to look after itself, and not seldom lent a hand in affairs of magnitude and importance. Trading and fighting indeed went together; buccaneers and privateers abounded, and the line between war and peace was negligently drawn. Peace there might be on land, but never a year passed, never a month for that matter, without its encounters at sea.

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was much the same. Britain's "navy" consisted of little more than merchantmen and their crews; for themselves and for her they traded; for themselves and for her they fought. As the records show, officers of the Royal Navy on half-pay or the retired list were not too proud to go to sea in

command of merchantmen, a practice which continued till the crowning year of 1815. On the "glorious first of June" 1796, the Merchant Service won his victory for Lord Howe, and the fleets of Hood and Nelson must have employed not less than fifty thousand men, who learnt their sea-going and their fighting as fishermen or traders. Nelson himself—symbol let it be of the inseparable fellowship—served his apprenticeship on a merchantman, and in those days service afloat, whether in king's ship or trader, counted for promotion in the Royal Navy. As for fighting, no one ever complained that the men of the Merchant Service shrank from undertaking that business, or fell short in the performance of it.

It was a merchant ship, the *Mountjoy*, that in 1689, under the fire of the shore batteries, led the vessels sent to the relief of Derry. She rammed and shattered the boom, forced the barrier, and raised the historic siege. "To prevent all thoughts among my men of surrendering ye ship," wrote the commander of the *Chambers*, an East India merchant vessel in 1703, when attacked by a French sixty-four and a frigate, "I nailed the ensigne

to the staff from head to foot, and stapled and fore-cockt the ensigne staff fast up. I resolved to part with ship and life together." In 1804 the East India Company's fleet in the China Seas engaged, beat off and pursued a powerful squadron of war vessels which contained two frigates and a line-of-battle ship of seventy-four guns, under the Comte de Linois.

As for transport, how many expeditions of British soldiers have been ferried by British merchantmen? A fleet of no less than ninety vessels took part in the great expedition to the Crimea in 1854, which carried thirty thousand men and three thousand horses to the distant seat of war; while in 1860 two hundred vessels transported troops to China. "I do not remember," wrote Lord Wolseley, "having witnessed a grander sight than our fleet presented when steering for the Peiho. All ships were under full sail, the breeze being just powerful enough to send them along at about five knots an hour, and yet no more than rippled the sea's surface, which shone with all the golden hues of a brilliant sunshine. The ships were in long lines, one vessel behind the other, with a man-of-war leading each line. . . . Looking upon that brilliant

naval spectacle I could scarcely realise the fact of being some 16,000 miles from England."

During the South African War, conducted 6000 miles from home, almost a million soldiers were carried across the seas, and about a million tons of stores. Hundreds of trading vessels were then employed. To-day we may count these elementary operations, for the fighting navy held the sea, and better parallels to the work of our merchant seamen in these times may be found in our earlier wars.

Gradually, indeed during the last hundred years, the services drew apart. Gradually the Board of Trade usurped the control of the Royal prerogative, exercised through the Admiralty, of the nation's shipping; but the hand of war has turned back the leaves, and Britain's naval power has again to be calculated, as it should never have ceased to be calculated, in the broad terms of men and ships; the extent and efficiency not of this service or that, but of the assembled and fraternal society of the sea. In its charge to-day is the destiny of the nations.

It is a good story that of the British sailor in the long centuries that lie between us and

Beowulf, the first seafarer and warrior in the seventh century, of which our literature tells. And if ever there was a tale to catch the ear it lies to the hand of the future historian of the Merchant Marine, for without it, without the resolution and enterprise with which it espoused the country's cause, the story were long since ended. That is the gist of the matter, and argument about it there can be none. Not for a moment is it disputable that despite all its immense resources and striking power the Grand Fleet could not have saved Europe or Britain as they have been saved from ruinous defeat. Without her merchant sailors, without her fisher-folk in this war as waged with a cunning and ruthless foe, the life-blood of Britain would inevitably have ebbed away drop by drop, a creeping and fatal paralysis overtaken her. Had her merchant sailors faltered, had her fisher-folk been less resolute, had their old qualities not sprung forth to meet the new and deadly perils, the destiny of the world would have been other than it will be. Not once or twice have they thus stood across the dragon's path. History, then, repeats itself, but on a scale by sea and land that dwarfs

even the spacious days when the Armada sailed from Spain, or Nelson scoured the Mediterranean. History repeats itself, but with a difference. The incidence of the pressure and the strain, protracted, exhausting, of this war, has been less directly upon the Grand Fleet, equal and more than equal to all that it has been called upon to perform. The incidence of the pressure has fallen, as it has always fallen, upon those men who were not by profession of the fighting company; upon ships and men engaged till the fateful year 1914 in peaceful callings; toilers of the deep who rolled round the world on the trade routes, or pursued the whale south of the equatorial line, or dragged their heavy trawls through the cold seas of the north.

It is no new thing then for men of the Merchant Service to man their guns and fight their ships. And not for the first time has Britain mobilised all her maritime resources. Never before, however, in a fashion so far-reaching or so impressive. Her previous history is written over again, but in larger characters. Never before have her merchant navies been called upon to support so stupendous an operation, to carry almost

the whole weight of transport and supplies for millions of fighting men. Since ships are the railroads of the Allies; since without ships neither soldiers nor guns can reach the distant seats of war; since without them Britain herself cannot hope to sustain her life—ships and sailors have been and are, as they have been in the past, the first and last and utterly essential element.

None but a great maritime people, however powerful its fighting fleets, could have faced or upheld for a week the gigantic undertaking. One in thirty of the men of these our islands is a sailor. We speak of an empire of thirteen million square miles, of four hundred millions of inhabitants. We should speak of it as an empire of ships and sailors, an empire of tonnage—twenty millions of it—carrying the weight of half the world's goods, a voyaging empire, in everlasting motion on the seas, that in days of peace serves every race and country—

> To give the poles the produce of the sun,
> And knit the unsocial climates into one,

that unites in a close-wrought texture the whole fabric of civilisation, links island to

island, continent to continent; a prodigious network of travel. The empire of ships, that has brought the East to meet the West, sought out the far and foreign lands, enabled China and India and the Isles to interchange ideas and gifts with Europe, is not the fleet of battleships but that other which, in times of peace, extended in a fashion no other instrument has ever rivalled, and enriched beyond arithmetic the intercourse and resources of mankind.

THE KEYSTONE OF THE ARCH

These are the men who sailed with Drake,
Masters and mates and crew;
These are the men, and the ways they take
Are the old ways through and through;
These are the men he knew.

THE communications of the Great Alliance —it is their point of vulnerability—are sea communications, and if that keystone slips,

Rome in Tiber melts, and the wide arch
Of the ranged Empire falls.

From the first the Central Powers held the splendid advantage of the interior and shorter lines. Theirs were the spokes of the wheel, the spokes along which run the railways. On the circumference of the wheel held by the Alliance, on the rim of ocean, went and came all things—men and the interminable machinery of war. The Allied and far longer lines therefore, on the arc of an immense circle, traverse the sea from Archangel to Gibraltar; from Gibraltar to Suez or the

Cape; from Suez to Colombo; from Colombo to Melbourne; from Melbourne to Vladivostock. Nothing less was here required than a railroad belting the globe, whose rolling-stock was ships. And the problem faced by Britain, as the great maritime partner in the alliance of 1913, remains essentially a problem of sea transport, and transport on a scale wholly without parallel in the world's history. Since Britain herself had never dreamt of raising an army of five million men, provision for the bridge of boats required for such numbers, with all their battle apparatus, had found no place in her plans. But she had ships and sailors.

"We have just returned here after making three trips with troops from Southampton to France," wrote an officer. "It was really marvellous work. Southampton was full of troop-ships and like clock-work they were handled. Every ship had a number allotted to her and a special signal. One ship would arrive alongside, fill up her holds and decks, and, in less than half-an-hour, she was away again. As soon as they got one vessel off her berth, up would go the signal for another steamer to take her place, and so the work

went on. Ship followed ship off the port like a line of vessels manœuvring. Orders came for 94 to go alongside. Up went the signal, and in less time than it takes one to write we were following the rest."

The ferrying of vast human and material cargoes across the Channel—an undertaking one might think serious enough—was in fact a trifle compared with the undertaking as a whole; for, since the recruiting areas for Britain's forces lay in every latitude, there fell within it the transference of great bodies of troops from Australia and New Zealand, across 10,000 miles of ocean; from India, across 6000 miles; from Canada, more than 2000 miles away, and not, be it remembered, a transference to Britain or France only, but to Egypt, the Persian Gulf, the Dardanelles, Salonika—a transference continuous, unending, processional.

"It is not only a war with Germany," said Sir Edward Carson. "You have a war—a naval war—going on over the whole of the seas—war in the Channel, war in the Atlantic, war in the Pacific, war in the Mediterranean, war round Egypt, war in the Adriatic, war in Mesopotamia, war at Salonika, and day by

day the Navy is called upon to supply the material for carrying on all these wars. Did anybody ever contemplate a war of that kind? When I mention one figure to you that at the commencement of the war we had something like 150 small vessels for patrol work, and now we have something like 3000, you will see the gigantic feat that has been accomplished by the Navy. In all these theatres of war we have to provide patrols, convoys, mine-sweepers, mine-layers, air service, mine-carriers, fleet messengers."

Owing to the demands of the Royal Navy upon the shipyards, additions to mercantile tonnage were out of the question. With the ordinary resources of peace the vast unapprehended responsibilities of war had to be met. There was no other way. Besides the armies and the great guns, the various belligerent zones called for hundreds of miles of railroad with engines and rolling-stock complete; horses and mules and their fodder; cargoes of wood for trench making; river boats in sections for the Persian Gulf; motor lorries, literally in thousands; material and food for whole moving populations and their multiform activities.

"During the last five or six weeks," said Sir William Robertson on May 12, "we have expended no less than 200,000 tons of munitions in France alone, and we have taken out some 50,000 tons of stones for making and mending roads."

"Everything has been taken ashore," wrote an officer on transport service in the East, "by lighters and rafts. The major part of our cargo is railway material, cattle trucks, ambulance vans, oxen, horses, mules, fodder, ammunition, and troops. We have a mixture of everything necessary for warfare, from 'a needle to an elephant.'"

Think also of the coal carried overseas to the Allies; nitrates shipped from South, munitions from North America; ore from Spain and the Mediterranean; and contemplate the dizzy shuffling on the high seas of these mighty freights. All the while the needs of peace remained inexorable. The sugar and the wheat, the cotton, coffee, and all the other requirements of the home population of these islands, had still unceasingly to be provided. The mind refuses to calculate in these dimensions; our foot-rules will not measure them. Let us however write down

the unthinkable figures. Eight millions of men; ten million tons of supplies and explosives; over a million sick and wounded; over a million horses and mules; fifty million gallons of petrol alone. These of course are merely the additional undertakings of war. To complete the picture one has to include ordinary imports and exports, such trifles as one hundred million hundredweights of wheat; seven million tons of iron ore; twenty-one million centals of cotton—the figures for 1916. For the same twelve months the value of the home products *exported* was five hundred millions. British ships have been busy in these thundering years!

But the Allies, you will say, assisted. France had 360 ocean-going vessels, Italy about the same number. Russia, 174. Belgium, 67. No doubt, yet these nations were nevertheless borrowers, not lenders. Their ships were far from sufficient for their own necessities, and to France, Britain, despite her own searching requirements, lent about 600 ships, and to Italy about 400, a sixth of her own far from adequate supply. "Without our Mercantile Marine the Navy—and indeed the nation—could not exist,"

said Admiral Jellicoe. One perceives the truth of it. But the tale does not end there. About a hundred merchant ships were commissioned as auxiliary cruisers and, armed with guns like the *Carmania*, took their share in the fighting. The *Empress of Japan* captured the collier *Exford*, the *Macedonia* rounded up the transports accompanying Von Spee, the *Orama* was in at the death of *Dresden*. Colliers too are needed for the Royal Navy; supply, repair and depot ships; distilling and aeroplane ships; auxiliaries for the fighting flotillas and the great blockade patrol. Extending from the Shetlands to the coast of Greenland and the Arctic ice a wide net had to be flung whose meshes were British ships. And yet again in the narrow seas and in the defiles of the trade routes, day in and day out, the British trawlers—fleets of them—swept for the German mines.

What were, in fact, the maritime resources that made these things at all possible? At the outbreak of war Britain possessed over 10,000 ships, and of these about 4000 ocean-going ships were over 1600 tons; of smaller ocean traders there were about 1000. Add to these the fishing trawlers and drifters,

over 3000 of which are now in Government employ. Gradually the traders were requisitioned, at first for military then for national purposes. Sugar was the first article for which Government took responsibility, first and early. Then came wheat, maize, rice, and other grains. To these were added month by month many other commodities of which the authorities took charge, and for which they found the necessary tonnage. The pool of free ships diminished, contracted to narrow limits, and finally dried up. Britain's shipping virtually passed in 1916 wholly under national control.

That is in brief the history of the ships; but what of the crews? What of the men and their willingness to serve under war conditions, surrounded by deadly risks? If we include over 100,000 fishermen, the marine population of the empire may be reckoned at not less than 300,000 men. Of these 170,000 are British seamen, 50,000 are Lascars, and 30,000 belong to other nationalities. There you have the absolute total of sea-farers, to whose numbers, owing to their way of life and the peculiarity of their profession, it is impossible during war rapidly or greatly to add. No

other reservoir of such skill and experience as theirs can anywhere be found. Perhaps the most valuable community in the world to-day, and certainly irreplacable. Means of replenishing it there is none. A Royal Commission appointed in 1858 reported that the nation "possesses in the Merchant Service elements of naval power such as no other Government enjoys," and in 1860 the Royal Naval Reserve Act was passed, by which the Royal Naval Volunteers became the Royal Naval Reserve, and a force enrolled which, though inadequate in numbers, has proved of inestimable value. The Royal Naval Reserve man signs on for a term of five years; undergoes each year a short period of training, and reports himself twice a year to the authorities. While in training he receives navy pay and a retaining fee of £4, 10s. a year during service as a merchant seaman. Twenty years' service qualifies him for a pension and a medal. Belonging to this force there were at the outbreak of the war about 18,500 officers and men available, but the number of merchant sailors and fishermen serving with the combatant forces has been trebled, and now stands at 11,000 officers and

65,000 men. Add to these 4828 officers and 28,000 men of the R.N.V.R. and another 100,000 merchant sailors who, since they share all the risks of a war with an enemy that makes no distinction between belligerents and non-combatants, may well be included among Britain's defenders, and one begins to perceive the true nature and extent of the nation's maritime resources and the utter dependence upon these resources of an island kingdom—the vulnerable heart of a sea-sundered empire. In 1893 the Imperial Merchant Service Guild had been established, a body, the value of whose services, already notable, cannot yet be fully calculated. To it, and to the profession it represents, the nation will yet do justice. For the professional skill and invincible courage of her merchant seamen has at length made clear to Britain the secret of her strength; the knowledge that to them she owes her place and power in the world. She has found in them the same skill and the same courage with which their forefathers sailed and fought in all the country's earlier wars. "The submarine scare," said the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, "has struck England

with paralysing effect, and the whole sea is as if swept clean at one blow." To this one answers that the sailing of no British ship has been delayed by an hour by fear of the submarine menace. If the sea be indeed swept clear of ships, how strange that every week records its batch of victims! A sufficient testimony, one would think, to their presence, and, might not one add, of equal eloquence in their praise? It was assumed—a magnificent assumption—that a British crew could never fail. It never did. The *Vedamore* was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland, and most of her crew killed or drowned. In wild and wintry weather the survivors, sixteen in all, after many hours' exposure in open boats, made a successful landing. These sixteen reached London and proposed, you will say, to snatch a few days' rest, a little comfort after their miseries. Their object was a different one:—to ask for a new ship. "Had enough?" one of the crew of the torpedoed *Southland* was asked, when he came ashore. "Not me," he replied, "I shall be off again as soon as I can find a berth." "If," said one torpedoed seaman, "there were fifty times the number

of submarines it wouldn't make no difference to us. While there's a ship afloat there will be plenty to man her. My mates and I were torpedoed a fortnight ago, and just as soon as we get another ship we shall be off."

You may say, "It is not natural that there should have been no failures." Well, here is one. "Only a short while ago," said Mr Cuthbert Laws, "we found it necessary to prosecute a seaman who had failed to join a transport, and there was no doubt that he was technically guilty, but he set up and successfully sustained a defence which is unique in the annals of the Mercantile Marine. He admitted that he had failed to join the vessel, but he said that his reason for doing so was that his shipmates refused to sail with him because he had already been torpedoed six times. In other words, while they were prepared to take the ordinary sporting chance of being blown up, they were not prepared to accept the handicap of having a Jonah on board!" She has her faults, has Britain, but she still breeds men: and mothers of men. Take the authentic circumstance of the vessel whose crew were not of British stock. They declined when safely in port

to undertake another and risky voyage. But there appeared to them next day an Englishwoman, the Captain's wife, with the announcement, perhaps unwelcome, that she proposed on that trip to accompany her husband. She went; and with her, for their manhood's sake, the reluctant crew.

The story of docks and harbours, of the loading and unloading of the war freights, merits a chapter of its own. To understand it you must remember that ships are of many sizes and of very varying draught. The depths of water in the ports, the tides, the quay accommodation, the provision of cranes and sorting sheds, of available railway trucks have in each case to be considered. Grain requires one type of machinery for unloading, timber another, fruit or meat yet another. If the cargo be mixed and consigned perhaps to hundreds of dealers, in various parts of the country, sorting sheds are a necessity. Many harbours provide only for small coasting craft and cannot accommodate large ocean traders, many are affected by tide and quite unprovided with docks; others again lack quay and truck accommodation save of the simplest order. There is also the problem of

dock labourers, men skilled in the handling of particular types of cargo. Manifestly you cannot order any ship to any port. Vessels must therefore run to their usual harbours and to provide the machinery for "turning them" rapidly round presents, under the congested conditions of war, a problem of extreme complexity.

"It is one of the ports," wrote a correspondent in the *Times*, "which the enemy has best reason to wish to close; a port, not in the British Isles, through which, since the war began, there has flowed a continuous stream of war material and of the food of armies. You pick your way for miles along the edges of stone quays, stepping over cables, past basin after basin and crossing channels by high-sided truss bridges, which swing to let the ships go through. For ships still go through. They never seem to stop. Always one bridge or another is swinging slowly to let a great steel freighter come in or a little panting tug go out with a tall bare-masted barque or schooner gliding behind her.

"Hardly a berth along all the miles of quays is vacant; great 12,000-ton leviathans (what a mark for a torpedo!) just in from the other

side of the world and little slab-sided boats that bring timber from the north. They have come by every possible sea-road; and they go to every point of the compass.

"And the quays! Somewhere in the world, one supposes, there must be a use for all that cotton, the acres of ragged bales piled higher than the second storeys of the houses which face the sea and from which great flocks blow off to litter the roadways. Can it be that we on the Western front are doing as Andrew Jackson's men did and are building the parapets and breastworks of our trenches of cotton bales? Then there are leagues of crates and frails and sacks and cases and barrels. One can only guess at some of the contents; but the air for a hundred yards is heavy with the smell of coffee and then of fruit. Those mountains there are made of sacks which bear the brand of Minneapolis flouring mills; and all that wilderness of barrels proclaims itself to be oil. The length of a row of houses is nothing but great hanks piled 15 feet high of 20 feet long canes; more canes, it seems, than could grow in all Ceylon.

"Flat cases of tinplate, packed evenly in solid masses, cover areas as big as Trafalgar

Square; and then the iron and steel! Girders and I-beams and structural iron of every sort, plates and rods and rails and huge parts of machines which only an engineer could name; coiled wire enough—it really seems no exaggeration—to re-string all the telegraph and telephone lines of the world."

Heavy munition trains, miles upon miles of them, are daily pouring into the Southern ports. Great guns, railway trucks, engines and rails form a part of these stupendous freights. There are many harbours in the South, but few capable of berthing, loading, and unloading the largest liners, and if we would criticise these operations, and free criticism of them has been after our national manner, plentiful, we should understand that to the transport work of peace that of the greatest of wars has been added, and understand too that the shipping problem involves much more than ships, and requires to-day something like the higher mathematics for its solution.

"Both are now one service in spirit," wrote Admiral Jellicoe of the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine; "and never have British seamen united in a more stern

and mighty cause." Say what we will, be it in prose or verse, it falls short of their deserving. The merchant sailor and the fisherman has had each his share in the fighting and more than his share in the labours of the war. They took part in Jutland and the earlier battles. Some are in command of destroyers and torpedo boats; others of vessels on the blockade patrol or of submarine chasers; others again of transport and repair ships. On mine-carriers and mine-sweepers they serve; on paddle steamers and panting tug boats; on water ships and balloon ships; on salvage and escort work. They are to be found on trawlers and drifters and motor craft; on captured German steamers, now playfully renamed, the Hun line—*Hungerford, Hun-stanton*; on oilers and colliers and meat ships, in the North Sea and Mediterranean and the distant oceans; on transport and dispatch, on observation and remount and hospital vessels everywhere. They gathered the great armies from the ends of the earth, they fuel and munition the Grand Fleet; the Suez Canal knows them and the Royal Indian Marine and the African rivers. No sea that has not seen them, "no

climate that is not witness to their toils." For proof that they are a pugnacious breed read the story of the Gallipoli landings, where Commander Unwin and Midshipman Drewry won each his Victoria Cross, where supplies were daily put ashore under the shrapnel fire from Turkish batteries; read the story of *Carmania's* fight with *Cap Trafalgar*; of *Clan M'Tavish* and her spirited combat with *Möwe*, which filled the seamen of the Grand Fleet with delighted admiration. Read of the whalers in Sudi harbour, of the attacks on Jubassi in the Cameroons; of the actions on the Tigris and Rufigi rivers, in all which actions officers of the Merchant Service distinguished themselves. Called upon for every type of action, navigating under war conditions by lightless coasts, responsible for new and strange undertakings, in armed or defenceless craft, on the bridge of sinking ships or adrift in open boats, the fearless spirit of the British sailor meets the occasion, and as with his ancestor and prototype of Viking times, the harder the enterprise the harder grows his heart.

It is good for us now and then to contemplate men nobler than ourselves; to be told

that volunteers over sixty years of age paid their own passage from Australia to serve afloat, that there is at least one engineer—and a health to him—of over eighty with a commission in the Royal Naval Reserve. For who is there so dead at heart as not to covet so springing and mounting a spirit? "I have taken the depth of the water," said Admiral Duncan in the engagement off the Texel, "and when the *Venerable* goes down, my flag will still fly."

There is something in it, this companionship with the sea, that kindles what is heroic in a race to the finest resolution. Perhaps it is not to be expected that we shore-dwellers should have more than a languid appreciation of hardships and labours indescribable, and should read tales of the sea rather for pleasure than edification, but if ever a people had masters in the school of nobility we are fortunate in our teachers of to-day. Already over 3000 men and officers of the Royal Naval Reserve have fallen in their country's service, and of merchant sailors pursuing their ordinary calling not fewer. Born fighters, you will say, the British. Yes, but these men died most of them without hope of glory.

When Captain Wicks of the *Straton* dashed in among the wreckage of the sinking *Runo* and assisted in the saving of two hundred lives, the look-out man shouted to him, "Two mines right ahead, sir." "Can't be helped," replied the Captain, "it is risking lives to save lives." Which is indeed, in a sentence, the daily task, whatever or wherever the allotted posts of these cavaliers of the sea. The day dawns or the night descends, to find them on the bridge or in the engine-room, north or south of the Line, running the grim gauntlet of murderous things that the sea, with all its grey ages of experience, never before has known.

SEA WARFARE: THE NEW STYLE

Come all ye jolly mariners, and list ye while I tell,
Afore we heave the capstan round and meet the Channel swell,
Of a handy ship, and sailor lads and women folk, a score,
And gallant gentlemen who sail below the ocean floor;
A tale as new, and strange, and true as any historic,
Of the German law and courtesie
And custom of the sea.

THAT our merchant seamen would be called upon to face the fiercest blast of the storm would have seemed a fantastic prophecy. Look, however, at the circumstances. They have been called paradoxical, unprecedented in the whole previous history of naval war. To think of it! A fleet—the British—of immeasurable and unchallenged strength, beyond debate absolute upon the seas, is found unable to protect its country's commerce! Slowly it rose and took shape, this spectre of an incredible, amazing situation. A new situation? Yes, in a way, for the weapons were new, but not so new as it

appears. Have any of us considered the losses of our Mercantile Marine in the American or the Napoleonic wars? During the latter we captured 440 French ships. How many did we lose? 5314 British vessels were captured by the French! Our losses were over 40 per cent. of our tonnage! This, remember, was in Nelson's days, when we held command of the sea. With these facts in mind one is better able to judge the price of sea supremacy and to understand that fleets have never been able wholly to safeguard commerce. As in our previous history the situation arises from the very supremacy of the Grand Fleet, a supremacy so complete as to leave no alternative to the weaker naval power which, in such circumstances, invariably resorts to the *guerre de course*. In the under water campaign we have a new form of attack, but it is simply the confession that upon the sea Germany was powerless and had abandoned hope. No less a confession, too, that beneath the sea and against the British Navy she was equally powerless. Who can doubt that had the chance been given she would unhesitatingly have preferred victory in fair fight, a victory resounding and glorious. That

denied her, she declined upon victory without honour, of any pattern and at any price. She gave free range to her unmatched genius for destruction.

Men, when they discussed naval warfare, viewed it with speculative eye as a clash of battleships in one or two terrific, decisive, world-shaking encounters. Few, if any, foresaw that the enemy, declining the great issue, would aim at a slow grinding pressure, adopting a kind of warfare in which the fighting fleets would hardly feel the shock. There indeed they lie in the misty North, volcanic and destroying powers which any hour may release, and yet from day to day and month to month they wait unchallenged, and the enemy blows are directed and dealt against less formidable adversaries. They rain with desperate violence against men whose profession was never that of arms, who nevertheless, were they offered a fair field and no favour, would prove themselves more than a match for their assailants. Unsustained by the exhilaration of battle, defenceless, and in single, far-separated ships, their part in the drama offers few attractions. There are enviable occupations, no doubt, even in war, but who would choose the

part of a running target for enemy shells and torpedoes?

It is natural to enquire how far Admiral Mahan's pronouncement on commerce destruction is true to-day. "The harassment and distress caused to a country by serious interference with its commerce will be conceded by all. It is doubtless a most important secondary operation of naval war, and is not likely to be abandoned till war itself shall cease: but regarded as a primary and fundamental measure, sufficient in itself to crush an enemy, it is probably a delusion, when presented in the fascinating garb of cheapness to the representatives of a people. Especially is it misleading when the nation against whom it is directed possesses, as Great Britain did and does, the two requisites of a strong sea power—a wide-spread healthy commerce and a powerful Navy." Has the advent of the submarine fundamentally altered the situation? "No," we may answer with confidence, if the rules of international law be observed. If these be thrown aside there remains, until the event decides, room for much argument.

To the most casual observer it seems now

obvious enough that the vulnerable point in the formidable power of the Alliance opposed to Germany lay in the length and character of its sea communications. But the German Higher Command, soldiers most of them, took long to realise it. Land power must out-match sea power, they reckoned. "Moltke," announced the *Tageblatt* triumphantly, "has conquered Mahan." Doubtless to harass British trade was expedient, and it had in the plans been marked down for attack. High hopes were entertained of a *guerre de course* conducted by armed cruisers in distant seas. Any impoverishment of the enemy is grist to the mill. But it was a secondary affair. And events proved that there was no sufficiency in it. When Von Spee's squadron vanished beneath the seas Germany applied her mind to the matter and perceived at length the true nature of the issue. Successes here and there could not help her. She must somehow, heroically or otherwise, cut the Gordian knot or reckon with defeat. Thus it was that the rôles were reversed, and while Britain unexpectedly threw her weight into military operations, Germany turned her gaze sea-

wards and sought to pluck victory from an element not her own.

Dimly at first, but with growing clearness she perceived that from the sea the Alliance daily renewed its strength, that the sea was the source of its recuperative energy, the healing well; that while the seas were open it would nourish as it were eternal youth, that the waterways were the avenues to the *elixir vitæ*, the resources of the world which made good even the crushing wear and tear of modern war. There is no better judge among the nations of where lie the odds in material things, and with faultless judgment she put aside any temptation that may have assailed her to make the heroic venture, to engage outright the Grand Fleet. There lay the irreducible factor in the situation. With its defeat the problem would have solved itself. But with Jutland that solution had to be abandoned, and with it the faith she had taught herself that in men and gunnery her navy was more than Britain's equal. Another way had to be chosen. Undefeated, could the Grand Fleet be circumvented? Could it somehow be eliminated from the calculation, could a blow be dealt at the

communications of the Alliance from which battleships were powerless to shield it? In evasion and circumvention, she judged, lay the key to the unforcible lock.

With the immense self-confidence therefore that marks these serfs of theory, the Germans drew their plan—a ruthless campaign, conducted with the same pitiless logic, the same patience and forethought that they were accustomed to devote to their military operations. Eluding the armed adversary, with all their great and remaining strength, they would strike at the unarmed:

> God's mercy, then, on little ships
> Who cannot fight for life.

Were it possible, and Germany believed it possible, to sever Britain's sea arteries, the hated enemy might bleed to death, slowly, perhaps, but surely. She perceived the joint in the harness and drove in the knife. Intimidation was here to play its usual part. If horror accompanied terror so much the better, the world must learn what it was to oppose an angry and implacable Germany. Then, and not till then, Britain realised the strength and weakness of her position; per-

ceived at last and with many searchings of heart her vulnerability, and with growing pride the peculiar genius of her race. So the sea affair finally reduced itself into an attack upon the Allies' communications, that is an attack upon Britain's Merchant Marine, accompanied, since no less would suffice, with crime of the first magnitude.

Casting about for weapons to be used against a foe unchallengable in a direct encounter Germany found three to her hand—the disguised raider, the mine, and the submarine, all, be it observed, prowling or furtive weapons, with whose stealthy assistance Germany proposes to usher in the Golden Age. With this new and triple-headed engine Britain was to be bludgeoned into submission. You desire to make allowances for Germany's difficulties, and they were many. Waive then the inherent defect of these engines, that two of them cannot be employed with humanity. Argue, if you like, that in the interests of your own people, the general interests of the race must be sacrificed; that war is war, and that chivalrous war is a Christian absurdity. The Dark Ages would no doubt have described the use of the new weapons

as savagery. In our enlightened times harsh phrases are inadmissable. There appears therefore to be need of some gentle uncomplaining word to describe the indiscriminate slaughter of non-combatants, of humanitarian helpers on relief ships, of crippled wounded aboard hospital ships. Her errand of mercy did not save the Norwegian steamer *Storsted*, known to be carrying a cargo of maize for the relief of starving Belgians.

Finally you come to Germany's dealing with neutrals. The world has dreamt many evil dreams, but this is a nightmare. You are at peace with a neighbouring nation. You find it necessary, nevertheless, to destroy its property. Wonderful! You are, in fact, on the friendliest terms with her people, to whom you owe many of your essential supplies, but you kill them without hesitation and without mercy. Still more wonderful! If they complain you become virtuously indignant and threaten worse things. It is past whooping! Already over eight hundred neutral ships, all of course unarmed, have been done to death. These are indeed martial achievements. Judge of the whole by a part of the most dolorous history in the records of

civilisation. "Norway," said the *National Tidende* in April 1917, "has lost since the beginning of the war one-third of her mercantile marine, and about three hundred of her sailors, and is now losing five lives daily and an average of two ships, valued at two million kroner." Denmark has lost 150 ships, and more than two hundred of her sailors have been killed. Do not mistake. It is all pure friendliness. As Hamlet says, "They but poison in jest." "Thirteen survivors of the crew of the Norwegian ship *Medusa*, 1023 tons, have been landed," runs the record of May 22, 1917, "their vessel having been shelled and sunk by a German submarine. Seven of the thirteen were hospital cases. The Germans, in addition to not giving them any warning, continued shelling the crew while they were lowering the boats. The bursting of the shells scattered shrapnel, which killed two men and severely wounded seven others. One man had half his left foot blown away, and another some of his scalp blown off, while a third had his neck lacerated."

Let us not imagine, however, that Germans are themselves in agreement with respect to

this warfare. Professor Flamm of Charlottenburg is dissatisfied. In *Die Woche* he advocates sterner dealing. Fewer men of the crews of torpedoed vessels should be saved. Best of all would it be if destroyed neutral ships disappeared without leaving a trace even of wreckage. Then terror would strike at men's hearts. How charming a friend is Professor Flamm. For it is not enemies he desires to treat thus. It is not war he advocates, only an exposition of the German mind. Norway, Denmark, and the rest are enjoying the pleasures of peace. Perhaps learning will supply us with a new name for these operations. Had Germany begun the war, it has been well said, with justice on her side her conduct of it would long since have driven justice, a fugitive, to the opposite camp. Into the teeth of this hurricane of hate the merchant seamen put forth, and every hour that we watch from sheltered homes it is taking toll of their lives. Read the long list of officers in the service that are gone, and remember that beyond it lies a longer and more sorrowful category still of men that held no rank nor ever thought of fame; en-

gineers and deck hands, boys and stokers, so that in the fishing villages from north to south the tiniest mourns its unreturning dead.

Of the raiders, so far as it has been written, we know the record. The sea is wide, and one might almost as well look for an escaped bird in the forest as for a single ship in any ocean. They have had their victims; fifty of our merchantmen were seized or sunk before the first phase ended with the battle of the Falklands and the destruction of Von Spee. There were, of course, escapes and adventures, like that of the Pacific Steam Navigation cargo vessel and her conversation with *Karlsruhe*, which had information of her position and sent out a wireless signal asking for the latitude and longitude. The operator, instructed by the captain, sceptical soul, refused the friendly suggestion. The polite enemy retorted, "English schweinhund. This is German warship, *Karlsruhe*, we will you find." But the night set in thick with misty rain, and though only a few miles distant the English ship, heedless of angry signals, slipped away and escaped. The subsequent disguised commerce raiders could only creep at long intervals and under colours not their own,

through the patrols, in rain or snow storms, by circuitous routes and through territorial waters. *Meteor*, under the Russian flag, was rounded up, deserted, and destroyed by her own crew. *Berlin* driven into Trondhjem and interned. *Greif*, disguised as a Norwegian ship, perished in the encounter with *Alcantara*.

Of these ventures, one may say, that they repeated tactics familiar in all our wars; tactics which never yet turned the scale or threatened to turn it. Consider now the far more serious menace of the submarine and mine. These were weapons indeed not altogether novel, the novelty lay in the scale and ruthless manner of their employment; and the ruthless policy once launched, three things, at first but dimly distinguishable amid the confusion of so vast a conflict, took shape and form. First, that the war, however long the decision might be postponed, had entered upon its final and decisive stage. Second, that the full strength and pressure of the attack would now be transferred from the Royal Navy to the Mercantile Marine; and third that upon its tenacity and powers of endurance

depended not the destiny of Britain alone but that of the world. It was to be a conflict grim and great, suited to the stupendous consequences which hung upon the issue, a conflict without the dramatic and inspiring incidents of engagements between embattled fleets, of monotonous, almost featureless, repetitions of the same gruesome story, in which the enemy trusted to the accumulated effect of a blow dealt again and again, and yet again, in hardly varying circumstances, reducing with each successful effort the maritime resources upon which the fortunes of the Alliance were absolutely staked. Britain's capital—who is now unaware of it?—is her shipping, and the drain upon that capital, the ceaseless call upon this bank of national security, could not fail if unarrested to compass her ruin. Britain, and with Britain her allies, would succumb to a series of stabs in the back.

How is one to account for the success of the submarine campaign? The answer is that Britain was not prepared for it. Why was she not prepared? For no other reason than that it was unthinkable. It is as if a respectable curate of your acquaintance were

to whip out a revolver and demand your purse. You are taken by surprise, for you had not thought these things possible in your neighbourhood, and particularly not to be expected from a clergyman. The world did not anticipate the new code of morals, more especially from a people of culture. It simplifies the business of the highwayman if you have believed him to be an evangelist. Deceived by the spectacles and the missionary manner, Britain left her merchant ships unarmed, and was quite unprovided with mines or any other defensive machinery for her traders.

By the law and custom of the nations merchant vessels must not be destroyed at sea but brought into port, and become prizes of war only if condemned after a judicial enquiry. From the first these provisions of international law were thrown aside by Germany. That they had existed, that civilisation had trusted, and that she herself had endorsed them gave her a magnificent advantage. She took advantage—the most hideous form of depravity—of the world's growth in goodness. It was felt, however, that something might be pardoned

to an enemy in sore straits, and even Britain made no angry complaint. Having discarded civilised usage as regards property, and discarded it in vain, the temptation assailed her to descend another step and disregard considerations of humanity. At first, as one knows, the crews and passengers of torpedoed ships were given a chance to escape death. Then, reaching the lowest rung of the malevolent ladder, Germany bowed farewell to her last scruple.

Facilis descensus Averni. Free yourself from restraint, lay aside obligations moral and legal, and for the destruction of commerce you have in the submarine a weapon without equal, an immoral inspiration. Unaware that the world had outgrown morals, that chivalry was wholly out of date, Britain taken aback had, it may be confessed, no ready or immediate answer, and it seemed, indeed, as if the new instrument possessed qualities unanswerable, borrowed from the region of fable. Only in fables does one put on at will the mantle of invisibility or don invulnerable armour. To see without being seen; to cover yourself with a garment upon which blows fall in vain—these powers suggest

magic or dealings with the infernal world. How is an enemy to be resisted who can attack unexpectedly and, if threatened, vanish like a dream? Each of our merchant vessels, it has been said, it like an unarmed man walking down a dark lane infested with armed highwaymen.

Carrying thirty or forty of a crew, armed with a gun for surface fighting, and that terrible and devastating weapon, the torpedo, for the secret offensive, capable of an under-water speed—8 to 10 knots—equal to, and a surface speed of 18 to 20 knots—far in excess of the average trader; with a radius of action extending to three or four thousand miles, and the capacity of remaining at sea for months at a time, one need feel no surprise that the world rings with the performances of this submersible cruiser. The torpedo is in itself a mechanism of uncanny quality; nothing else than a small vessel, costing £1000 to build, it moves with a speed of 40 knots, is propelled by its own engines, and directed by its own steering gear. Effective at any range under 10,000 yards, given position at the range of a couple of miles it may easily

kill; at a mile it kills infallibly. Supply your merchantmen with guns and you drive the submarine to shelter, but you do not disarm it, and though it must manœuvre for position to discharge a successful torpedo, if the missile take effect, a single shot usually suffices. The German submarine hates the gun behind which stands a British crew, and prefers the warfare in which blow cannot be returned for blow. No Briton dislikes a fair fight, or doubts of his success in it, but a warfare in which he can neither see nor retaliate upon the foe, in which his hands are tied, strikes his simple and uncultured mind as cowardly. There is nothing for it but to run away, and for running away Britons are by nature little adapted.

Of the capital expended by Germany on this campaign fifteen or twenty millions at least already lie in the ocean depths; but side by side with these millions lies the uncounted wealth of the slaughtered ships and cargoes. Only when we perceive the true character of the weapon and the fury of the campaign can the endurance and achievements of the merchant sailor emerge for us into the full sunshine of their splendour.

Examine the matter coolly and one sees that the submarine owes its success as much to its novelty as to its inherent capacities. The limitations and defects are as obvious as the qualities. Virtually powerless on the surface against armed vessels of high speed like destroyers, completely submerged it has hearing indeed, but not sight. It can obtain little or no knowledge of the drift of current and tide and is blind to surrounding dangers. Above water it can be rammed or shelled, below it can be netted or mined. Strange things have happened to it at the hands of ingenious skippers. Anchors have rudely disturbed its repose when nestling in the sand, and an enterprising seaman has been known to leap aboard a rising vessel, lay about him with a hammer, smash the periscope tube, and deprive the aggrieved monster, like another Polyphemus, of his single eye. Against observation or attack from the air, too, the submarine is wholly without defence. It is incapable of descending to great depths and rarely dives lower than 50 feet. The dirigible or hydroplane poised above it is master of the situation, can discover its presence at a great depth, and with ease and

perfect security destroy it, either when it emerges or even by means of explosives below the surface.

"Spotting" is everything, for once spotted there is little hope for the monster. A signal calls to his lair the neighbouring patrols, and surrounded by a swarm of hostile craft he is quickly given the choice of ascending to surrender or descending for ever. To this mastery the comparative freedom of the English Channel from submarine depredations is largely due. Life aboard such a craft is not without its terrors and bad moments, while it creeps through channels where the water is shoal or puts up its periscope in an unlucky spot. We may be sure that black care sits in the cabin with the crew, a justified uneasiness. The end may be very sudden, and of a kind one hardly likes to think of. Mistakes—and mistakes with half-trained crews are inevitable—bring quick disaster. The deep-sea pirates aboard super-submarines operating on the trade routes have lighter hearts no doubt than those engaged in the narrow seas, but exits and entrances are not without peril, as the North Sea depths could reveal. Yet their work goes forward, and the

last sentences of this barbaric sea history are not yet written.

What of the defence in this crafty and lawless war, and what counter-measures have been taken? Apart from the continual patrolling of dangerous areas and the vigilant anti-submarine warfare conducted by the warders of the sea routes, the secrets of which none may reveal, broadly stated, the only present reply to torpedo attacks consists in some form of evasion. A thousand busy brains are at work, but were an answer discovered to-day how many months would be needed to prepare and supply the necessary gear to some three or four thousand ships?

Meanwhile traffic instructions form a separate and highly developed section of Admiralty work. Shipping Intelligence officers, at the ports, in close conjunction with the Customs Officers issue route orders, varying with the needs of the hour, to each British ship outward bound. To neutrals advice is tendered. Orders for homeward-bound vessels are now issued at foreign ports in the Western hemisphere or elsewhere by the Consular officers, assisted by men of sea-faring experience specially instructed. In addition, masters

have every precise schooling in the arts of avoiding hostile craft. That these arts have their value experience proves, and of the various devices zigzagging has been found perhaps the most effective. The attacking submarine sights her prospective prey and notes the course. She then manœuvres to bring her torpedo-tubes to bear, and submerges. But the helm on the approaching vessel is meanwhile put over to port or starboard and the favourable position is lost. Reduced in speed and turning power by submersion, the submarine commander is thrown out. Again he manœuvres for position but finds his target has again shifted her helm and escaped him. Zigzagging, however, adds materially to the length of the voyage, and naturally the delay is cordially disliked by skippers. A temptation naturally assails men of their breed to make a dash for it. Time, too, is always a consideration, and the risks to a vessel of less than 10 knots speed are not appreciably diminished by its adoption. For an 8-knot boat, and many of the most valuable traders can hardly attain a greater pace, the increase in the length of the voyage and the time involved balance or

eliminate the advantage of this and other palliatives. In the nature of the case there can be no immediate remedy for the disease. Merchant ships—that is the root of the trouble—are not built to resist torpedoes. Possibly such ships might be built, possibly a cure for this sea malady may yet be found. But to combat a new plague or pestilence the physician must have time to study the devastating organism and its peculiar properties. The study proceeds. The arming of merchantmen, a preliminary and successful measure, was necessary to drive the U-boat below the surface. There, capable only of torpedo attack, it loses half its observing, half its striking powers. But the true defence is a vigorous offensive, which is the business not of merchantmen but of patrol and fighting ships. They are at work in daily-increasing numbers, they employ new and ingenious devices, they are happy and confident. But the veil is never lifted. A deep, gloomy, mysterious silence prevails. Where her submarines are lost, how they are lost Germany is ignorant. Each goes forth on its mission, with uncertainty at the prow and misgiving at the helm. All the enemy knows is that

vessel after vessel fails to return, that they run like sand through the fingers.

How many submarines does Germany possess? Probably, including the mine-layers, the number does not much, if at all, exceed two hundred, and of these only a proportion can be at sea in any given week or month, perhaps a third. Submarines, despite Germany's boasts, her favourite psychological weapon, cannot be built in a day nor yet a month, and crews are worse than useless with less than half a year's training. The end is not in sight, but the barometer of hope must already be falling fast. "If the submarine attack against England be defeated," said Herr Ballin, "it will be a miracle, and I do not believe in miracles." One looks forward with interest to the conversion of Herr Ballin to a less sceptical theology. His philosophical countrymen will, no doubt, supply him with the necessary metaphysic.

As for ourselves and our lack of foresight in this matter, let us not be too critical. We misjudged human nature, that is all. We believed some species of it were extinct. We believed there were things of which white men were not capable. For this noble error,

and it was noble, we pay the price, and are not without compensation. Since none can judge of a vessel's seaworthiness in harbour, none can judge of the spirit of a man or race until it encounters the storm. And if again the superb courage and shining of the British sailor has been proved, if we have been reminded that as a nation with him we stand or fall, we may be magnanimous, and return polite thanks to an enemy that has made these things clear, who has liberated yet again the flashing spirit of liberty. The stars still shine for us above the wild weather of the world.

THE MINE-FISHERS

In any weather
They flock'd together,
Birds of a feather,
Through Dover Strait;

The seas that kiss'd her
Brought tramp or drifter
From ports that miss'd her
In flag and freight;

Trawler and whaler
And deep-sea sailor,
They would not fail her
At danger's gate.

ALMOST before a gun had spoken the fishermen rallied to their country's aid. Some few indeed were off the Danish coast or far North, Iceland way, unconscious that a more feverish business than fishing had begun, and heard the astonishing news only on their return from waters already troubled. Which of us knows anything of this community or thought it essential to our naval efficiency?

Yet if anywhere the spirit of personal independence survives, they cherish it these men, Britons to the bone, wedded to freedom since their ancestors came in their long galleys out of the North-east to harry the Saxon farmers. Take English and Scotch together and you may number the East Coast fishermen at a hundred thousand, and their ships, trawlers and drifters, accustomed to voyage to the Polar ice or the White Sea, at some three thousand six hundred. Of these perhaps four hundred of the slower and more ancient craft, the lame ducks of the flotillas, some of them of outlandish type and antiquated gear, manned by boys and men past service in the wars, still drag their trawls or lie to their nets to keep the markets supplied. Since 80 per cent. of our spoils of the sea go abroad in normal times, the home supplies can be maintained by the reduced fleet. The rest, over three thousand, steamers and rare seaboats all, are in national employ, often with their crews complete and handled by the skippers who know them, proud warrant officers now in His Majesty's fleet, and working for the most part in groups commanded by some lieutenant of the Royal Naval Reserve,

a Commodore, in his way, with a squadron admirals might envy. Many of the fisher folk belonged to the Reserve and joined the fighting fleets, and practically all of military age are long since involved in the sea affair. Two things belong to the story—these men, whether of Grimsby or Hull, Cardiff or Leith, or any other of the great centres, were volunteers, and assess their motives for what you will, it was not the Government wage that brought them. Their fellows, old men, still on the fishing grounds, do a thriving business compared with that for which the Government pays its few shillings a day. It is well that the country should know that the work for which no gold can pay was not undertaken for gold; and that they have held on as mine-sweepers when as fishermen they would have lain snugly in harbour. "If there have been frozen feet in the trenches there have been frozen fingers on the sea," says one. "Fifteen hours of drenching and buffeting were our portion that day. The vessel with the pull of the tackle and the drive of the engines keeping her like a half-tide rock, never clear of sweeping seas. Thud, slap, crash and swish as they came over our

bows and swirled along the deck, never ceasing." They were needed, every man of them. For it happened that in this most civilised warfare machines were employed with which, search the world round for them, no other men could effectively deal. But for their never-resting labours the seas about these islands would have been as impassable for ships as a tropical forest for a motor car. Let us open our eyes and acknowledge the grandiosity of the German mind, the spaciousness of its schemes. It is not characteristic of Germany to do things by halves, and the simple may well be amazed at the grandeur of her mine-laying campaign.

No country can teach Germany anything on this subject. She is sole mistress of the black art. Before the outbreak of war she had put her mind to it and possessed vessels built to carry 500 mines, fitted with special and ingenious mechanisms for lowering and floating them. When her surface ships were driven from the seas her resources were not exhausted, and a fleet of mine-laying submarines continues the business with magnificent industry. No one will ever write a song on "The Mariners of Germany," for

the German is not a sailor. Nor has he ever understood the code of honour which prevails upon the sea. But as an engineer he has perhaps few equals, and in so far as engineering skill applied to ships can go you will do well to reckon with him.

As for his mines themselves, they are of many patterns, strange sea-beasts with "all manner of horns and of humps." "There are some kinds," says the author of "In the Northern Mists," "that have horns —like a dilemma; and any logician will tell you that a dilemma is a very dangerous thing for the inexperienced to handle. It is better not to break the horns of the ungodly in this case, for when the horns are broken the mine explodes. Some are arranged to come up to the surface long after they are hidden in the depths, and at unexpected times, like regrettable incidents from a hectic past. Others are constructed with a fiendish ingenuity to wait after touching a ship until they have felt out its most vulnerable part before exploding. Some are made to float about at random, as a malevolent wit flings about his spiteful jests, caring not whom he wounds. And others, more dangerous still,

drift when they were meant to remain anchored; and then, when they are cast up on the German coasts, our enemy is ever ready to describe them as *English* mines—never German, mark you. But it is a rascally people, that cares nothing for the difference between *meum* and *tuum*. The task of sweeping for all these different brands of tinned doom is almost as great as that of the old lady in the nursery rhyme, whose job it was to sweep the cobwebs out of the sky. The labour of Sisyphus was child's play compared to it."

Conceived then in the magnificent style, elaborated with curious subtlety, representing meticulous and anxious thought the purpose was no less than to convert the waters frequented by Allied shipping into a broad field of death. The magnitude of the conception fascinates one. Had it been understood, as it has not been understood, the timid might have had less sleep o' nights; but they slept untroubled, and none save those whose anxious charge it was to counter the campaign can judge or form any estimate of its far-reaching and devilish audacity.

It has been, let us bear in mind, not an occasional but a continuous menace, and

threatens us still. Day and night mines are freely sown—a patch here and a patch there —steadily, persistently. "They grow like daisies," some one has said, "cut down in the afternoon, they are up again next morning." Let the sweepers work how they will the end is never in sight. Mines have been laid from the Cape to the West Indies; from Archangel to the Dardanelles; off every Allied port; in every navigable channel; on every avenue of approach to these islands from the ocean or the narrow sea. Strewn with a lavishness that counts no cost too heavy, they represent an expenditure that runs to many millions. In one area alone more than a thousand mines have been destroyed by our sweepers. No more necessary, no more exhausting, no more hazardous work than theirs is done to-day in any waters.

Let it not be supposed that these admirable activities involve a careless or haphazard disposal of the destructive charges. Each has been laid in accordance with a calculated plan and with definite intention. There is a method in this madness. Take a single instance: in certain areas mines are laid time and again to deflect the stream of traffic into

a channel where submarines may act with comparative impunity from danger. The game is played so that the pawn, endeavouring to escape capture by the knight falls a victim to the castle. These thoughtful contrivances demand thoughtful answers, and result in an encounter of wits such as the world will probably never see again upon the chequer-board of the seas. But not wits alone are sufficient, and the pieces in the game are numerous. Bear in mind that the area of the North Sea alone is greater than Germany. It is not a case for the employment of twenty or fifty or a hundred vessels. One can form some picture of such activities. But what are the actual numbers? On the British side some 1700 ships and 25,000 men concentrate their activities on sweeping for mines. The mind staggers at the immensity of the thing. Is anyone surprised that German confidence stands high; that it believed no answer was possible; that it had as good right to believe in the success of these battalions of explosives as in German artillery and German armies?

In the early days mines were directed against our fighting fleet, to endanger their excursions in the North Sea, or to fetter

their movements in pursuit of hostile vessels. To protect the fleet, mine-sweepers, specially constructed, or old gunboats, built some of them as early as 1887, manned throughout by naval ratings, kept, unknown to the public —whose gaze was concentrated upon the trawlers and drifters—a vigil unimaginable in its range and exhausting in its intensity. Their work continues; but the jackals, baulked of nobler prey, changed their hunting ground and laid still more numerous traps for less wary creatures—the traders. They, too, however, are learning caution. There is a certain region through which, since the war began, 38,000 trading vessels have voyaged; in which no more than four have been destroyed by mines. Weigh these facts and consider the compliment that fits the achievement.

If you ask by what methods the German mines are safely garnered you will be told that the trawlers sweep in pairs; a method which seems to have advantages over that of the enemy. Pursue your enquiry and you will learn that they are less dangerous at high than at low water; that floating mines since they are easily pushed aside, and explode

to expend their force largely in the vacant air, are less of a danger than the anchored type; that when brought to the surface gun or rifle fire disposes of them at a safe distance; that there are other little things to be found when fishing. "Last month, when nearly completing the sweeping, I swept up five mines and came across five full petrol tanks, each holding about fifty-one gallons or more, which appeared as if they had been moored."

When you have gathered these facts from an authority, the conversation lapses into generalities. It is useless to display an eagerness for knowledge—the book is closed. For the curious it may be added, however, that mine-fishing is an art, considerably more complicated than baiting a hook or throwing a fly; that some men are fishers by nature and others, despite experience, remain clumsy; that the wriggle and the tug and the play of the fish are part of the sport, that the amusement is not unaccompanied by danger, and that good fishermen are not easy to replace. With these suggestions the matter stands adjourned *sine die*—that is, till the end of the war.

Mine-sweepers are of course protected, for the sympathetic mind will understand that a submarine which has just laid traps resents their removal. Like the ghost of the murderer, its habit is to haunt the region of its labours. For trading with these gentry the fishers have their own methods, sometimes more primitive and courageous than effective, as when the master of a sailing craft—it is fact, not fiction—fancied himself a 40-knot destroyer and tried to ram the enemy. Unarmed audacity occasionally, indeed, achieves miracles. One gunless trawler, by persistent ill-mannered harrassing pursuit, so terrified a German commander who was attacking a merchant vessel, that his quarry escaped. Submarine hunting in armed craft is, of course, another matter and accounted the greatest of all great games. Sea-going Britons pine for it with an inextinguishable longing. Lowestoft mine-sweepers hanker after leave not to spend by the fireside but on this brave sport. Volunteers jostle each other for the service. Admirals previously on the retired list renew in it all the zest and vigour of their youth. Alas, that after the war a pursuit which out-

bids in popularity tiger-shooting or steeple-chasing should come to an untimely end.

Another submarine habit is with infinite, untiring Teutonic patience to do the work over again in the wake of the sweepers, for which amiable procedure there is no cure save an equal and opposite persistence. Yet another is to lay little mines nearer the surface to catch trawlers engaged in fishing for bigger ones placed deeper for larger ships. Oh excellent, persevering, and philanthropic Teuton!

No one in the world can teach trawler or drifter men, who spend less than a month ashore in the twelve, seamanship. "Smooth sea and storm sea" is alike to them. Grey, tumbling waters are their winter portion, decks continually awash, frozen gear, intolerable motion. Watch that short bluff little vessel 100 miles from any port and a gale rising, with her high bows staggering up from the hollow of the wave that hid her from sight, streaming from rail to rail, to plunge headlong into the next hollow, climb up the approaching mountain to encounter the smothering crest, shake herself and disappear again into the turbid water

between the bigger seas. You will see no one on deck save the unconcerned man at the wheel in oilskins and sea-boots, in whom the turmoil produces no emotion. That wild sky and furious sea are familiar acquaintances of his, that waif of a boat rolling and pitching through it is his home. Skald to the Viking's son! Mine-fishing to men of this stamp was merely a variation in the ordinary way of business. Of course the danger was vastly greater, but they were inured to danger. Against shelling they have a prejudice, for mines they care nothing, and among those still at their old trade the Admiralty prohibition against fishing in mine-fields—a prohibition constantly disregarded—creates perhaps as much resentment as the German sowing of them. Good brooms they make these broad-beamed, bluff-bowed vessels, and life-preservers no less. To their presence in the North Sea and elsewhere thousands already owe their lives. Twenty miles off Tory Island a trawler picked up the survivors from the *Manchester Commerce*; another, the *Coriander*, saved 150 of the men from *Cressy* and *Hogue*; still another brought home fifty men of the ill-fated *Hawke*; the *Daisy* rescued twenty men from the destroyer

Recruit. In the Mediterranean the North Sea men were ubiquitous. In answer to distress signals they appeared as if by magic. "Ultimately," wrote one of the passengers on the ill-fated *Arabia*, "I was put aboard a trawler on which were about 166 rescued. . . . We had few wraps, and most of us lay till we reached Malta in drenched clothes. They were thirty-seven hours of utter misery . . . More than half the survivors on the trawler were women and children."

Drudgery, and monotonous drudgery, it all is; relieved, if you find it relief, that any moment may see the end of you and your ship. Here is the process. "A deck hand came up the ladder and handed up two pneumatic lifebelts. The Captain silently passed one to me. After we had fastened them securely he glanced at the chart and compass. Then he gave a command and a signal was flashed to the other boat. Thus the first preparation was made for our 'fishing.' The other boat nosed easily alongside. There was a clanking of machinery and she made off again, carrying one end of a heavy steel cable. Several hundred yards away she resumed her course, while the cable sagged

far down beneath the surface of the water. That was all—we were sweeping. . . . It was late in the afternoon when we made our first catch. A sudden tightening of the cable made it clear that we had hit an obstruction. There was just a slight tremor all through the boat. Everybody stepped to the rail and gazed intently into the water. 'That'll be one,' said the commander as the cable relaxed. Sure enough it was 'one.' The Boche mine broke the surface of the water and floated free, her moorings of 1-inch steel cut off as cleanly as if with a mighty pair of shears. As it rolled lazily in the swell it reminded me of a great black turtle with spikes on its back." Such is the normal procedure, and a rifle bullet does the rest. "There was an explosion that made our teeth rattle, while a huge volume of black smoke belched upward into the still air. And a shining column of water shot straight up through the black cloud to a height of 50 or 60 feet. . . . Then the water poured back through the smoke and the grim cloud drifted off over the waste of the North Sea."

If you pursue your search for incidents you may meet something of this type. The

gear of the trawler *Pelican* was just being hove in when a mine was discovered entangled in the warp. The winch was stopped just as the mine bumped—anxious moment—the ship's side. Any lurch meant an explosion and certain destruction. The skipper ordered all hands into the boat and to pull away. Remaining alone on board, with infinite care he worked to clear the mine, gently, very gently, unwinding the gear of the winch. The men lay on their oars at a safe distance and waited in suspense. At last the mine was released and the skipper cautiously paid out 120 fathoms of line. Hardly was it done when, having touched something, the devil-fish exploded, shaking the trawler from stem to stern and half-filling the distant boat with water. When the warp was hauled on board it revealed nothing but a mass of wreckage.

If you are in search of adventure on board a mine-sweeper and are in luck you may enjoy the excitement of an aeroplane attack, with bombs dropping around you from the overhead circling enemy, or machine-gun bullets rattling on the deck from a German battle-plane. Or again an angry submarine commander rising out of the deep may send

a shell or two your way. For the rest it is a peaceful life, and if you escape the attentions of all these death-dealing devices, mine, aeroplane and submarine, you may arrive home safe enough. The odds are probably somewhat in your favour, but the mathematicians have not worked out the table of chances. You may have the best of it and secure quite a number of mines, or one of the enemy devices may secure you. You never can tell. Here is a transcript.

"It was about four in the morning. This time of year. Just such darkness as this. The *London Girl* came down on my port side. . . . I opened the door (of the deck-house) to hear what she had to say. 'Don't go near so-and-so,' her old man shouted. 'What's that?' I said. 'Don't go,' he hailed—'so-and-so—some mines adrift.' That's all. I was just backing into the wheel-house again when there was a flash and a roar. He'd gone. Not enough left afloat to make a platter. That's it. There's five boats in line astern of you one minute. There's a bright light, and when you look back there's only four. It ain't the mines you see that's the worry. I've seen hundreds. It's the

beggar you can't see. Never know when it's under your forefoot. Dirty game, like, I call it. No sense in it. Sinking ships. Any ships. I'd never have believed it. Don't know what's come over the world." Most of us are in like case. Only the knights of the German Round Table, those idealist seekers after grace and loveliness, know and in good time, perhaps, will take the rest of the world into their confidence.

Against mines you cannot retaliate, but against the U-boat you can occasionally hit back. "A number of trawlers," writes a correspondent, "were fishing off Aberdeen on a fairly stormy day when a submarine came to the surface and commenced firing at the trawlers, making for one in particular—the *Strathearn*. The *Strathearn* ran for it, pursued by the submarine. While the shots were falling round, some of the crew shouted to Geordie, the skipper, "Geordie, get the boat out.' Said Geordie, 'I'll see you in h—ll first! Fire up! If she's gaun doon, I'm gaun doon. Fire up! I think we hae a chance.'

"During this time Geordie was making towards another trawler, the *Commissioner*

(armed), which had her gear down and seemed totally unconcerned. But, as soon as the *Strathearn* passed her, and there was nothing between the submarine and herself, a blow with an axe cut her gear away, she swung round, and at the same moment her gun appeared.

"Her first shot missed the submarine, so did the second; the third hit the enemy's conning tower, a fourth hit the enemy's gun, and the fifth sent the submarine down in flames, and all was over, bar the shouting."

Our Allies could bear witness to the work of British mine-sweepers and patrols in the Mediterranean. In one raid Austrian cruisers and destroyers attacked the patrol line in the Adriatic and sank fourteen of our drifters. Our fishermen have swept for mines off Russian, French and Italian ports, and of their work at the Dardanelles all the world has heard. Captain Woodgate of the *Koorah* has vividly described an episode in which he was himself the protagonist.

"When we were up in the Dardanelles there were what we call three groups—One, Two and Three—each group had to go up, one at a time. The vessel I was in belonged

to the second group. The night we were going to make the final dash in the Dardanelles, up in the Narrows, we went, no lights up, everything covered in. They let us get right up to the Narrows, and as we turned round to take our sweeps up one of our number was blown up. Then they peppered us from each side, from one and a half to two miles. We heard cries for help. I said, 'We shall have to do the best we can, and go back and pick up.' There was no waiting, no saying, 'Who shall go?' As soon as I called for volunteers three jumped in. I kept the vessel as close as I could to shelter them. I did not think any would come back alive, but they did come back. No one was hit, and I said, 'Now we'll get the boat in.' Just as we got the boat nicely clear of the water, along came a shot and knocked it in splinters. I shouted, 'All hands keep under cover as much as you can,' and I got on the bridge, and we went full steam ahead. I could not tell you what it was like, with floating and sunken mines and shots everywhere. We got knocked about, the mast almost gone, rigging gone, and she was riddled right along the starboard side.

One of the hands we picked up had his left arm smashed with shrapnel; that was all the injury we got. When we got out the commander came alongside and said, 'Have you seen any more trawlers?' I said, 'Yes, we've got the crew of one on board, the *Manx Hero*.' We were the last out, and I can tell you I never want to see such a sight again. . . . I thought of the three men in the fiery furnace, how they were preserved, and of Daniel in the lion's den, and I think of the twenty-four of us coming out under that terrible fire and the water covered with floating and sunken mines."

"There's one good thing about it," remarked a skipper who had his second vessel blown up under him, "you take it calmer the second time." We thought we knew the metal of these men. We did, but we know it better now. Eighty of these skippers have been killed in action, many have been blown up more than once, and several, among them that celebrity "Submarine Billy," have had three such elevating experiences. But it makes no difference. They go to sea again. One hardly knows what to make of this type of human being. Perhaps

the British race has no monopoly in it, but one wonders. Take the case of the *Gowanlee*, a drifter, summoned to surrender by an Austrian cruiser in the Adriatic. The skipper's answer, in the vein of Sir Richard Grenville, rejoicing in the monstrous odds against him, was to call for three cheers and to engage the cruiser with one six-pounder, the only gun he had. That gun, served by a deck hand with a shattered leg, continued to fire till the skipper brought his vessel out of the encounter with his flag flying. What praise is equal to this spirit? Let an expert speak. The commander of a destroyer, whose testimonial, if any testimonials are required, has value.

"Only a quarter of an hour before the Admiral had wished me a pleasant trip. That quarter of an hour now seemed æons away. The Channel was battering us and bruising us. . . . To climb to the bridge was a perilous adventure in mountaineering. Here crouched three figures, swathed from head to heel like Polar explorers. The glass of the wind-screen was sweating and trickling like the window of a railway carriage. From time to time the Captain wiped clear patches

with the finger of his fur glove and made very uncomplimentary remarks about the snow. Behind him stood the steersman, a swaddled mummy, with a blue nose tip, dripping icicles. All in a moment appeared a smudge on the horizon—'a friend and brother—the King of the Trawlers.' 'They're It, absolutely It,' said the Captain, 'No weather's too bad for 'em. They're our eyes and our ears. They know every blessed wave in the Channel, not merely as passing acquaintances, but they address 'em by their Christian names. They'll do anything, and go anywhere and chance the luck. They're just simple fishermen, but they run the whole show and they run it magnificently—guns, semaphores, wireless, everything! They live on kippers and tea, and I don't believe they ever go to sleep.'"

If the Royal Navy, which has its own views on efficiency, says these things of them, further remarks seem needless.

THE SEA TRAFFICKERS

Quit now the dusty terraces and taverns of the town,
And to the great green meadows you shall with us go down;
By the long capes and islands the open highways run
For us the pilgrims of the sea, and pupils of the sun.

'Tis Neptune pours the wine for us, the deep-sea Muses sing,
And through our airy palaces the flutes of morning ring:
We traffic with the stars, we trade adown the Milky Way,
We are the pilots of romance, merchants of Arcady.

UNFOLD a map of the world and observe how small a part of the earth's surface is land, how much less habitable land, how vast on the other hand—nearly three-quarters of the whole—the interminable plain of sea. Here you have an almost limitless expanse and without a barrier, here you have what was once the dividing flood, the estranging ocean, what is now Nature's great medium of communication. There are no difficult mountains to cross, no scorching deserts, the way lies open. One can sail round the

world without touching land, one cannot walk round it without somewhere crossing the sea. Imagine then a road which leads everywhere and you have the first clue to the meaning of that majestic thing, sea traffic. These immense regions, once so forbidding, and until a few hundred years ago, unknown, uncharted ocean solitudes, are now the broad highway of all the nations. Across them vessels under every flag, laden with all that men produce or peoples require, follow the plotted curves of the chart, and "toss the miles aside" with the same confidence, the same continuity as the trains on their iron tracks across Europe and America. They depart and arrive along the familiar belts of passenger and trade routes with the regularity and exactness of the great land expresses. Safe in times of peace from all dangers save the natural perils of the sea, the freedom of this, the broadest and busiest of all highways, open to all, used by all, vital to the modern structure of civilisation, is unchallenged. Imagine this highway closed and the whole fabric falls to pieces, trade expires, commerce is at an end, famine and chaos impend

over half the inhabited regions of the globe.

Seated between the old world and the new, at the centre of traffic, at the midmost point of all the markets, Britain laid hold of her great opportunity. All the great routes were open to her, south to Africa, south-west to the Spanish Main and Panama, west to America and Canada, north-east to the Baltic, east through the pillars of Hercules to the Mediterranean, a route prolonged by the Suez Canal to India, China and Japan. The opportunity was, indeed, great, and to meet it she built her merchant navy, "the most stupendous monument," as Bullen wrote, "of human energy and enterprise that the world has ever seen." What the nations bought and sold the ships of England carried. Necessity gave assistance, for as islanders her own people had need of overseas products and sent abroad their own manufactures. Nor was it disadvantageous that in order to build her fortunes she had to exhibit enterprise and cultivate hardihood. No one will say that the seafarer's life is an easy one. But its discipline and hardships brought their reward in the

courage and sustained vigour of the race. When it was a new thing the romance of this ocean travel took hold of the Elizabethan imagination, and the poets rhapsodised over "Labrador's high promontory cape," "the Pearled Isles," "the famous island Mogadore," "the golden Tagus or the Western Inde."

> I should but lose myself and craze my brain
> Striving to give this glory of the main
> A full description, though the Muses nine
> Should quaff to me in rich Mendaeum wine.

The Elizabethan poets gloried too in Britain's insularity:

> This precious stone set in the silver sea,

protected by the waters as a house is protected by a moat "against the envy of less happier lands." The historians have expounded the advantages of her position. We were happy in that we were islanders, inhabiting a natural and impregnable fortress. The sea was our bulwark, to us it was no barrier, to the enemy an impassable one. The romantic mood is, however, difficult to maintain, and of late the coming and

going of some ten or eleven thousand British ships has been productive of little emotion. As a rule the landsman "dismisses the sea with a shudder." Rocks and shoals and icebergs and dark nights and fogs and the making of difficult harbours and winds of strength "8" on the Beaufort scale, are not things that habitually occupy his mind. Hourly our seamen were engaged in the routine of a perilous calling. Two thousand of them in times of peace lose their lives every year. We were not much concerned. But the submarine has now come to our assistance. It has at least this to its credit that we view our insularity with less composure. We see now that there are two sides to this blessing of insularity. We know now that every ton of food brought into the country is purchased with men's lives, and that is an arresting thought. We know, too, that if they do not continue to bring it we are in very evil case, a still more arresting and unfamiliar idea. We have had episodes and hours and experience it will not be easy to forget. There is something to be said for the submarine. It has proved to us that not to our encircling sea but to our

sailors we owe our good fortune; that the sea is as ready to ruin as to enrich us; that in them, not in her, we must put our trust. "The one thing," it has been said, "that would really wake the nation to the vital importance of the Merchant Navy would be for the butcher, the baker, and the grocer to cease to ring the back-door bell every morning." Well, we have come within measurable distance of that and can now turn with the more appreciation to the anxieties and trials of the men who have averted the catastrophe.

"It was passing beautiful to see, and to think of," says the old chronicler of a sea-battle in the Edwardian days; "the glistening armour, the flags and streamers glancing and quivering in the wind." The beauty and the bravado which lingered on till Nelson's time are gone. Gone too are the courtesy and chivalry of the old sea battles. You need not go for romance, with the pleasant sting of brine in it, to the ugly and stealthy story of the German submarine. A dull monotonous history from first to last, as he who cares to run over the Admiralty files will find; a baleful, intoler-

able, damnable repetition. The very extent and enormity of the record deadens all sensibility, so that one soon begins to read mechanically, giving no thought to the matter, however terrible. Let us set down some sentences, each a verbal extract from the official record.

"The crew were mustered after the explosion and five men were missing."

"While abandoning the ship the chief engineer was killed by the enemy's fire, and two of the crew were wounded."

"Two of the crew were not seen after the explosion."

"Two of the crew were killed and two were scalded."

"Of the fifteen who left the ship only the chief officer and three others were saved."

"While the ship was being abandoned the enemy continued to fire, hitting the ship and wounding five men."

"One man who had been badly scalded died on board the patrol which picked up the boat."

"The chief officer's boat was picked up at 10 a.m., the boatswain who had been wounded dying in the boat."

"Eighteen of the crew went down in the vessel. One boat reached the shore but there was a heavy sea running and two men were drowned while attempting to land."

"In one of the boats picked up twenty-four hours after the vessel's destruction were seventeen dead and frozen bodies."

"The submarine rendered no assistance. The commander looked at the men in the water, and shook his fist, saying something in German."

"The master's boat with seven men kept at the oars for forty hours, having a heavy sea to contend with. The steward died in the boat from exhaustion. On reaching the shore the boat capsized, but all six reached land, though the second engineer and a fireman died immediately on the beach."

"The ship was hove to in a gale of wind when she was torpedoed without warning by an unseen submarine. The ship was abandoned by the crew in three boats. Two men were drowned while manning the boats. The apprentice who made his report states that the chief officer's boat, when last

seen, was apparently filled with water, lying broadside on to the sea. . . . The boat of the apprentice which had been lying to with a sea-anchor out, made sail at dawn and steered for the land. At 9.30 the survivors were picked up. While drifting in the gale six of the crew of this boat died and were buried at sea. . . . Only nine men from the steamship were landed, suffering from exposure and frostbite."

"At 8.40 the boat capsized owing to the sea, and sight of the other boat was lost. All hands (sixteen) regained boat, but she was full of water. Before midnight she had again capsized three times and then only four hands were left. About 8 a.m. two seamen became exhausted and were washed overboard. A handkerchief on a stick failed to attract the attention of a passing vessel. About 5 o'clock the first mate dropped into the water in the boat and died. His body and the only survivor were picked up two days after the sinking of the vessel." What profit in further citations from this baleful volume? Multiply these records by hundreds and one begins to appreciate the prowess of the enemy in dealing with defence-

less vessels. Gentlemen of the German Navy, we congratulate you!

The official phraseology does not help us to realise these happenings. The records deal only in flat commonplaces. There is not a picturesque word anywhere, no sign of emotion, an utter absence of psychology. We are not told how the men felt when the shells struck the ship or the torpedo tore out its entrails. They appear to do just ordinary sensible things and probably the ideas that occurred to them were ordinary sensible ideas. When the steering gear is shattered or the engines disabled they do their best to repair the damage. If a boat capsizes they try to right her. When attacked by aeroplanes they take up a rifle, if there is one aboard, and fire at them, without much effect. But what else can you do? As for excitement, these men are not given to it. Nerve storms are not in their line of life.

The look-out man under the conditions of the new warfare has need of his eyesight. Dangers overhead, dangers on the surface, dangers underfoot. To scan at one and the same moment the horizon for the conning-

tower of a U-boat, the water around and ahead of him for mines, and the sky for approaching aircraft, is a task inconsistent with any form of contemplative philosophy. A chapter on "Pleasant Half-hours with Aeroplanes" will form a part of future histories of the Merchant Service. Witness the experience of the *Avocet* on her voyage from Rotterdam. "The weather being calm and clear, sea smooth, but foul with drifting mines, three aeroplanes were observed coming up from the Belgian Coast, one being a large 'battle-plane.' In a few minutes they were circling over the ship, and the battle-plane dropped the first bomb, which hit the water fifteen feet away, making a terrific report, flames and water rising up for 50 feet, and afterwards leaving the surface of the sea black over a radius of 30 feet, as far as it was possible to judge. Altogether thirty-six bombs were dropped, all falling close, six of them missing the steamer by not more than 7 feet.

"After apparently exhausting all the bombs, the battle-plane took up a position off the port beam and opened fire at the bridge with a machine gun. The ship's

sides, decks, and water were struck with many bullets—it was like a shower of hail. A port in the chief engineer's room was pierced and his bed filled with broken glass.

"The battle-plane was handled with great skill, attacking from a height of from 800 to 1000 feet. Going ahead of the ship, he turned and came end on to meet her, and when parallel to her dropped his bombs so as to have her full length and make sure of scoring a hit. The ship's helm was put hard-a-starboard, and as she swung to port three bombs missed the starboard bow and three the port quarter by at most 7 feet. Had the vessel kept her course these bombs would have landed on the forecastle head and poop deck.

"The two smaller planes crossed and recrossed the *Avocet*, dropping their bombs as they passed over her. They all made a most determined attempt to sink the ship, which only failed because they hadn't nerve enough to fly lower.

"After the first bomb was dropped a rapid rifle fire was commenced, which was kept up until the rifles were uncomfortably

hot. The chief officer of the *Avocet* was lucky enough to explode a rocket distress signal within a few feet of one Taube; had it hit him there would have been a wreck in mid-air. The action lasted thirty-five minutes, and when it was over and the aeroplanes flew away the decks of the *Avocet* were littered with shrapnel. . . . The look-out man on the forecastle head actually reported a floating mine right ahead of the ship, while bombs were bursting all around. He stuck to his post through it all, and kept a good look-out."

It is the habit of nations to recall and glorify their past, to dwell with satisfaction upon the doings of their heroes, the achievements of their great men. These enter into and become a part of the national life. Perhaps the world may yet see another and a rarer thing—a nation weeping at the tomb of its honour. For with what emotion—will it be one of happiness?—can the Germany of to-morrow recall a history like the following?

French S.S. *Venezia*,
Fabre Line,
At Sea, *March 28th*, 1917.

The Managers,
Messrs The Union Castle Mail S.S. Co. (Ltd.)
London.

Gentlemen,—With deep regret I have to report the loss of your steamer *Alnwick Castle*, which was torpedoed without warning at 6.10 a.m. on Monday, March 19, in a position about 320 miles from the Scilly Islands.

At the time of the disaster there were on board, besides one hundred members of my own crew and fourteen passengers, the captain and twenty-four of the crew of the collier transport *Trevose*, whom I had rescued from their boats at 5.30 p.m. on the previous day, Sunday, March 18, their ship having been torpedoed at 11 a.m. that day, two Arab firemen being killed by the explosion, which wrecked the engine-room.

I attach a list of survivors from my life-boat rescued by the S.S. *Venezia* on Friday, March 23, together with those who perished

from exposure and thirst in the boat. It may be summarised as follows:

Captain and crew of *Alnwick Castle*	13	souls
Third-class passengers	6	
Crew of *Trevose*	5	
	24	survivors
Crew of *Alnwick Castle* who perished in lifeboat	5	
Total occupants of No. 1 lifeboat	29	

I was being served with morning coffee at about 6.10 a.m. when the explosion occurred, blowing up the hatches and beams from No. 2 and sending up a high column of water and *débris* which fell back on the bridge. The chief officer put the engines full astern, and I directed him to get the boats away. All our six boats were safely launched and left the ship, which was rapidly sinking by the head.

The forecastle was now (6.30 a.m.) just dipping, though the ship maintained an upright position without list. The people in my boat were clamouring for me to come,

as they were alarmed by the danger of the ship plunging. The purser informed me that every one was out of the ship, and I then took Mr Carnaby from his post, and we went down to No. 1 boat and pulled away. At a safe distance we waited to see the end of the *Alnwick Castle*. Then we observed the submarine quietly emerge from the sea end on to the ship with a gun trained on her. She showed no periscope—just a conning-tower and a gun as she lay there—silent and sinister. In about ten minutes the *Alnwick Castle* plunged bow first below the surface; her whistle gave one blast and the main topmast broke off, there was a smothered roar and a cloud of dirt, and we were left in our boats, 139 people, 300 miles from land. The submarine lay between the boats, but whether she spoke any of them I do not know. She proceeded north-east after a steamer which was homeward bound about four miles away, and soon after we saw a tall column of water, etc., and knew that she had found another victim.

I got in touch with all the boats, and from the number of their occupants I was satisfied that every one was safely in them.

The one lady passenger and her baby three months old were with the stewardess in the chief officer's boat. I directed the third officer to transfer four of his men to the second officer's boat to equalise the number, and told them all to steer between east and east-north-east for the Channel. We all made sail before a light westerly wind, which freshened before sunset, when we reefed down. After dark I saw no more of the other boats. That was Monday, March 19.

I found only three men who could help me to steer, and one of these subsequently became delirious, leaving only three of us. At 2 a.m. Tuesday, the wind and sea had increased to a force when I deemed it unsafe to sail any longer; also it was working to the north-west and north-north-west. I furled the sail and streamed the sea-anchor, and we used the canvas boat-cover to afford us some shelter from the constant spray and bitter wind. At daylight we found our sea-anchor and the rudder had both gone. There was too much sea to sail; we manœuvred with oars, whilst I lashed two oars together and made another sea-

anchor. We spent the whole of Tuesday fighting the sea, struggling with oars to assist the sea-anchor to head the boat up to the waves, constantly soaked with cold spray and pierced with the bitter wind, which was now from the north. I served out water twice daily, one dipper between two men, which made a portion about equal to one-third of a condensed-milk tin. We divided a tin of milk between four men once a day, and a tin of beef (6 lbs.) was more than sufficient to provide a portion for each person (twenty-nine) once a day. At midnight Tuesday-Wednesday, the northerly wind fell light, and we made sail again, the wind gradually working to north-east and increasing after sunrise. All the morning and afternoon of Wednesday we kept under way until about 8 p.m., when I was compelled to heave-to again. During this day the iron step of our mast gave way and our mast and sail went overboard, but we saved them, and were able to improvise a new step with the aid of an axe and piece of wood fitted to support the boat-cover strong-back. We were now feeling the pangs of thirst as well as the exhaustion

of labour and exposure and want of sleep. Some pitiful appeals were made for water. I issued an extra ration to a few of the weaker ones only.

During the night of Wednesday-Thursday the wind dropped for a couple of hours and several showers of hail fell. The hailstones were eagerly scraped from our clothing and swallowed. I ordered the sail to be spread out in the hope of catching water from a rain shower, but we were disappointed in this, for the rain was too light. Several of the men were getting light-headed, and I found that they had been drinking salt water in spite of my earnest and vehement order.

It was with great difficulty that anyone could be prevailed on to bale out the water, which seemed to leak into the boat at an astonishing rate, perhaps due to some rivets having been started by the pounding she had received.

At 4 a.m. the wind came away again from north-east and we made sail, but unfortunately it freshened again and we were constantly soaked with spray and had to be always baling. Our water was now

very low, and we decided to mix condensed milk with it. Most of the men were now helpless, and several were raving in delirium. The foreman cattleman, W. Kitcher, died and was buried. Soon after dark the sea became confused and angry; I furled the tiny reef sail and put out the sea-anchor. At 8 p.m. we were swamped by a breaking sea and I thought all was over. A moan of despair rose in the darkness, but I shouted to them, "Bale, bale, bale," and assured them that the boat could not sink. How they found the balers and bucket in the dark I don't know, but they managed to free the boat, whilst I shifted the sea-anchor to the stern and made a tiny bit of sail and got her away before the wind. After that escape the wind died away about midnight, and then we spent a most distressing night. Several of the men collapsed and others temporarily lost their reason, and one of these became pugnacious and climbed about the boat uttering complaints and threats.

The horror of that night, together with the physical suffering, are beyond my power of description. Before daylight, however, on March 23, the wind permitting, I managed,

with the help of the few who remained able, to set sail again, hoping now to be in the Bay of Biscay and to surely see some vessel to succour us. Never a sail or wisp of smoke had we seen. When daylight came the appeals for water were so angry and insistent that I deemed it best to make an issue at once. After that had gone round, amidst much cursing and snatching, we could see that only one more issue remained. One fireman, Thomas, was dead; another was nearly gone; my steward, Buckley, was almost gone; we tried to pour some milk and water down his throat, but he could not swallow. No one could now eat biscuits; it was impossible to swallow anything solid, our throats were afire, our lips furred, our limbs numbed, our hands were white and bloodless. During the forenoon, Friday 23rd, another fireman named Tribe died, and my steward, Buckley, died; also a cattleman, whose only name I could get as Peter, collapsed and died about noon.

To our unspeakable relief we were rescued about 1.30 p.m. on Friday, 23rd, by the French steamer *Venezia*, of the Fabre Line, for New York for horses. A con-

siderable swell was running, and in our enfeebled state we were unable to properly manœuvre our boat, but the French captain, M. Paul Bonifacie, handled his empty vessel with great skill and brought her alongside us, sending out a lifebuoy on a line for us to seize. We were unable to climb the ladders, so they hoisted us one by one in ropes until the twenty-four live men were aboard. The four dead bodies were left in the boat, and she was fired at by the gunners of the *Venezia* in order to destroy her, but the shots did not take effect.

I earnestly hope that the other five boats have been picked up, for I fear that neither of the small accident boats had much chance of surviving the weather I experienced. At present I have not yet regained fully the use of my hands and feet, but hope to be fit again before my arrival in England, when I trust you will honour me with appointment to another ship.

I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,

(*Signed*) BENJ. CHAVE.

Steamship *Alnwick Castle* torpedoed at 6.10 a.m. 19/3/17. Crew rescued by Steam-

ship *Venezia*, 23/3/17, and landed at New York:—B. Chave, *master*; H. Macdougall, *chief engineer*; R. G. D. Speedy, *doctor*; R. E. Jones, *purser*; N. E. Carnaby, *Marconi operator*; K. R. Hemmings, *cadet*; S. Merrels, *quartermaster*; T. Morris, *A.B.*; A. Meill, *greaser*; F. Softley, *fireman*; H. Weyers, *assistant steward*; S. Hopkins, *fireman*.

Deaths.—R. Thomas, *fireman*; Tribe, *fireman and trimmer*; Buckley, *captain's steward*; W. Kitcher, *foreman cattleman*; Peter (?), *cattleman*.

Rescued passengers ex "Alnwick Castle," 3rd class.—J. Wilson, J. Burley, G. Fraser, D. J. Williams, W. T. Newham, E. O. Morrison.

There are, of course, records which provide better reading. "When the ship was 22 miles S.S.E. from Flambro' Head," writes an officer, "the second mate reported he saw a mine. To pass a mine involves a penalty, so I turned back and got close to it. It had five prongs on it, and was right in the track of shipping. As I had no gun to destroy it, and in the vicinity of Flambro' would be the nearest patrol boat, I thought it best to put a mark on it, as we would possibly lose it through the

night, and settle someone coming along. I ordered the small boat out although there was a moderate breeze S.W. with quite a choppy sea, also a N.E. swell. I could not ask anyone to go and make a line fast to it, as it is a very dangerous object to handle, so I decided to go myself. When lowering the boat down, Mr Oliver (chief officer) and Blanche the boatswain got into her, and wished to share the danger. I asked them to consider, and say their prayers. I also ordered the second mate that as soon as he saw we were connected with the mine to send the lifeboat to take us off the small boat, as we intended to leave her as a buoy or mark to the mine, and then we would advise another ship to send patrol steamer. We got to the mine, but had great difficulty making a rope fast to it, owing to its peculiar shape. After two failures, we fell on a plan to make the rope stop from slipping under it. We put a timber-hitch round the body of the mine and hung the hitch up with strands to two of the horns. What with the bobbing up and down and keeping the boat from coming down on the horns, and cold water, it was no nice job. Any-

how it got finished at last, and it seemed so secure that I thought we would be able to tow it until we met a patrol boat, so when the lifeboat came I returned on board her, and took her on board. She got damaged putting her out and taking in, owing to the ship rolling. I now picked up the small boat with the other two men and got another line connected on to the one on the mine and went slow ahead. This worked all right, but I thought she could go faster so put on full speed. This was now 6 p.m. About five minutes after full speed the mine exploded and sent the water and a column of black smoke from two to three hundred feet in the air. Several pieces of the mine fell on deck, small bits, also small stuff like clinker from the funnel. It was a relief to all hands, and possibly saved some other ship's mishap, as we met about twenty that night on the opposite course to us."

Worthy of the best sea company is the story of Robert Fergusson, a Glasgow man but a naturalised American, and his companions, Smith and Welch, who refused in the heaviest of gales to leave the tug *Valiant*,

when she was abandoned by her captain and crew in mid-Atlantic. "I wouldn't have brought her back for all the money in the world if the British Government hadn't wanted her," he said, "but I knew that every ship was wanted." Fortified by that thought Fergusson determined to stand by the vessel and save her if she could be saved. "Show your Yankee spirit," he cried to the Americans in the crew. And Welch responded, "I'm for you." "I'll not quit either," said Smith the fireman. And the great liner which had stood by and taken off the others left them—the three men—to fight their way homeward, if indeed that forlorn hope might succeed, in the battered craft, through the worst weather the Atlantic had known that winter. Smothered by great seas, with all the tug's gear on deck smashed or adrift, the three fought on, Fergusson on the bridge, Welch at the engines, and Smith toiling in the stokehold, each alone. Then the stearing gear went, and the vessel was thrown on her beam ends. Wallowing in the trough, it seemed impossible that she could live, the seas mounting to her upper deck. But live she did, and without

food or drink, with the last ounce of their strength spent and more than spent, supported by their own dauntless determination and that incalculable fortune which loves to side with a superb undertaking, they made land and the port of Cardiff, to the honour of both Britain and America, an alliance we may believe invincible.

To read too of men like the trawler skipper, who, when a shell from a pursuing submarine smashed part of the wheel under his hands. "went on steering with the broken spokes," fought his enemy with his light gun and finally drove him off, makes one feel that it is something to have entered life under British colours. Sir Percy Scott, in his forecast of the character maritime war would probably assume, can hardly have had the British sailor in his eye when he wrote, "Trade is timid, it will not need more than one or two ships sent to the bottom to hold up the food supply of this country." How overwhelming is the evidence for this timidity. The timidity of Captain Lane, for instance, who continued to fight the enemy submarine amid the flames which its shell fire had produced,

beat off his pursuer, and when the crew were safely in the boats and the vessel in a sinking condition, with the assistance of the engineer himself, beached his ship, and finally subduing the flames, repaired the damages and resumed his voyage. The timidity of the Parslows, father and son—the father killed at the wheel, succeeded by the son, who resolutely held on his course and saved his vessel. The timidity of Captain Pillar, who saved seventy men of the *Formidable* by incomparable seamanship and a daring manœuvre in a furious gale, or of Captain Walker of the transport *Mercian*, an unarmed vessel, crowded with troops, who kept on his way undeterred by the storm of shells from the enemy, though his decks were full of dead and wounded. The timidity aboard the *Thordis*, a heavily-laden collier, attacked when head to wind and sea an easy victim, capable of no more than three knots, whose captain put over his helm, and crashing into the astonished enemy sent her to the bottom. There is the story of the timid skipper of the *Wandle*, another collier, who, blown off his feet on the bridge by the concussion of a shell, gave back shot

for shot, sank his enemy, and in his little vessel, her flag still flying, made a triumphal progress up the Thames with her rent bulwarks as proof of her timidity; the syrens on the tugs ahead and astern advertising it; the bells ringing at Greenwich Hospital, and riverside London cheering itself hoarse for joy of it. There is the story of the timid Captain Kinneir, who, ordered to stop by a German cruiser, north of Magellan Straits, answered the order by driving his ship, the *Ortega*, right into Nelson's Straits, the most gloomy ocean defile in the world, without anchorage, an uncharted channel never before attempted, which no seaman knows or desires to know, and so baffled his pursuers, who dared not follow. You cannot capture the record, for it outruns description. These timid captains, in the spirit of the old English, fight till none is left to fight.

Then there are the timid apprentices and deck-hands and engineers. The seas swarm with them, they are to be found on every cargo tank and collier and transport and ocean liner. You cannot rid yourself of these nervous sea-farers. There was Davies,

second officer of the *Armenian*, who saved thirty-five of her crew; and Hetherington of the *Jacona*, who in somewhat similar circumstances swam from the sinking ship to a drifting boat, into which he dragged his shipmates clinging to drifting wreckage. There were the engineers of the *Southport*, at the Carolines, seized by the German corvette *Geier*. Left with her machinery dismantled that she might serve as an enemy store ship, these men in twelve days of feverish work replaced the essential parts, and setting sail made Brisbane, 2000 miles away, in a ship capable only of steaming one way. There was the half-hour's work of three men, Engineers Wilson, East, and the mate Gooderham, a fishing boat mined in the North Sea, the first of whom, heedless of the scalding steam in the damaged engine-room, rushed in, and after desperate exertions plugged the hole caused by the explosion, while East dragged from an almost hopeless position in the bunker, the imprisoned stoker, and Gooderham swung a boat over and rescued under the overhanging side of another trawler, mined at the same time, seven of her crew. Look through the long list of Admiralty

rewards for timidity in rescue work, in battles against odds, in seamanship. Germany, hanging on the arm of the false jade to whom she has sold herself, the creed of frightfulness, was very sure.

"Swept clear of ships," was her description of the Channel. Pathetic delusion! Why, it is more like a maritime fair. Never was there such a bustle of shipping since the world was made. An average of over a hundred merchant ships a day pass through the narrow gateway guarded by the Dover patrol. Motor boats, flocks of them; scores of traders at anchor in the Downs; busy transports on their way to Havre; up to windward a cluster of mine-sweepers; down to leeward a line of lean destroyers. It is night and day with them as with all the ships, through every changing mood of the Channel —rain, storm, snow blizzards, sunshine and sweet airs or "wind like a whetted knife." For this is the gate of all the gates, the vital trade route, and from Foreland to Start, from Start to Lizard in three years of war the German fleet has not seen these famous headlands! Very busy, but very much at home, are the British vessels in that long sea lane.

Talkative, too, for the gossip never ceases. Hoarse megaphone conversations, rocket and semaphore talk, wireless chatter without end. Within a few hours' steaming of the lively scene, when you may count as many as fifty vessels within sight at one time, lies the magnificent German fleet, for it is magnificent, save the British, the finest the world has ever seen, equipped with all the most destructive engines the heart of man could devise. Hindenburg and his devoted divisions suffer terrible things under the fire of 4000 British guns, discharging 200,000 tons of shells within the passage of a few short weeks. Admirals Von Scheer and Von Hipper pace their quarter-decks and take no notice. They know that these guns, these shells, and the troops behind them can enter France only by water. Here surely was their opportunity, and yet only in the outer seas, and there only by furtive attacks, is the transport upon which all depends anywhere impeded.

That the bridge from England to France stands firm, that the Channel is no sundering gulf, but as it were solid land, may seem to us as natural as it is essential, but that

it does stand firm is not merely, if we ponder it, a wonder in itself, it is perhaps the greatest of the wonders that we have witnessed in these amazing years. By the navy that vital area, that great and indispensable bridge has been securely held, and when we say "the navy" let us now and always mean nothing short of British ships and sailors anywhere, everywhere, in all the range and variety of their sea-faring activities. Let us separate them neither in our thoughts nor our affections, and say of our merchant sailors and fishermen as of the Royal Navy that—what was expected of them they accomplished, what was required of them they gave; if courage it was there, if skill it was always forthcoming, if death they offered their lives freely. There were among them no strikers or conscientious objectors. In all the virtues that mankind have held honourable they need not fear comparison either with their own ancestors or with their adversaries. From "the stoker who put his soul into his shovel" to the captain who was the last to leave his ship they upheld beyond reproach the chivalry of the great sea tradition. And if we say that

the last chapter of the Merchant Sailor's history, tested by any standard you care to apply, is nobler than any previously written, we do him no more than justice, and yet ask for him universal and wondering admiration.

APPENDIX A

Summary of the Losses sustained by Neutrals

From August 8, 1914, *to April* 26, 1917

	Mined	Torpedoed	Total Ships Sunk	Total Ascertained Tonnage
Dutch . .	41	35	76	148,921
Swedish .	30	71	101	99,628
Norwegian .	54	382	436	987,816
Danish . .	20	94	114	123,385
Spanish . .	2	33	35	75,769
American .	4	16	20	59,256
Brazilian .	..	2	2	6,719
Greek . .	1	59	60	147,923
Argentine .	..	1	1	281
Peruvian .	..	1	1	1,419
Uruguayan .	..	1	1	2,537
Total .	152	695	847	1,653,654

APPENDIX B

Imports during the War

Wheat

1911	98,000,000	cwts.
1912	110,000,000	,,
1913	106,000,000	,,
1914	104,000,000	,,
1915	89,000,000	,,
1916	100,000,000	,,

Iron Ore

1911	6,346,000	tons.
1912	6,602,000	,,
1913	7,442,000	,,
1914	5,705,000	,,
1915	6,197,000	,,
1916	6,906,000	,,

Cotton

1911	22,071,000	centals of	100 lbs.
1912	28,058,000	,,	,,
1913	21,742,000	,,	,,
1914	18,641,000	,,	,,
1915	26,476,000	,,	,,
1916	21,710,000	,,	,,

APPENDIX C

The following was the strength of the Royal Naval Reserve on the 1st of January 1914:—

	1914	1917
Officers of the Military Branch	1,250	8,500
Probationary Midshipmen (new scheme)	51	
Commissioned Engineer Officers	150	
Assistant Paymasters (Accountants)	106	
Warrant Engineers	174	
Engineroom Artificers	546	
Seaman ratings	10,223	20,000
Stoker ratings	5,019	
Trawler Section	..	34,000
	18,500	62,500

APPENDIX D

Value of Imports for Home Consumption and Exports of Home Produce

	Imports	*Exports*
1911	£577,000,000	£454,000,000
1912	633,000,000	487,000,000
1913	659,000,000	525,000,000
1914	601,000,000	431,000,000
1915	755,000,000	385,000,000
1916	852,000,000	507,000,000

APPENDIX E

FIRING ON SURVIVORS IN BOATS

LIST OF AUTHENTICATED CASES

The International Conference of Merchant Seamen, meeting at Anderton's Hotel, has drawn up the following list of authenticated instances of enemy submarines firing on survivors whilst in ships' boats :—

1. *Kildare*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, April 12, 1917. Whilst boats were pulling clear of ship shells came over them and then a submarine was seen on the surface. She fired from 10 to 15 shells at the boats, killing an A.B.
2. *John W. Pearn*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, May 1, 1917. Submarine fired two shots at boat, which was pulling away.
3. *Vulcana*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, March 7, 1917. After boat had been got out, she capsized in the heavy swell running, and had to be righted. Firing was continued by the submarine until boat was clear.
4. *Belgian Prince*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, July 31, 1917. Lifeboats not fired on, but broken up and survivors thrown into sea after being placed on outside of submarine, which submerged, leaving them to their fate, after also depriving them of lifebelts.
5. *Westminster*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, December 14, 1916. Survivors took to boats and were shelled by submarine, captain and chief officer being killed.
6. *Eavestone*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, February 3, 1917. Submarine turned her gun on boats, firing three shrapnel shells and striking both boats. Third shell killed master, steward, donkeyman, and two A.B.'s; severely wounded second officer.
7. *Addah*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, June 15, 1917. Submarine opened fire on master's boat, killing eight men, and after boat had been sunk and men were swimming in the water, submarine shelled them with shrapnel.
8. *Umaria*, British s.s. Sunk by submarine, May 26, 1917. Submarine fired on boat, injuring all occupants.
9. *Vanland*, Swedish s.s. Attacked by submarine, July 23, 1917. As lifeboat was making for shore, submarine continued to fire on master and crew with machine-gun, wounding the second mate.
10. *Baltic*, Swedish s.s. Sunk by submarine, June 27, 1917. Boats fired on for about an hour after crew abandoned ship.
11. *Freden*, Danish s.s. Sunk by submarine, May 22, 1917. Lifeboat damaged, and several of crew wounded while trying to mend it; one Frenchman killed, other severely wounded.
12. *Hestia*, Dutch s.s. Sunk by submarine, March 30, 1917. One boat fired on by submarine and sunk, six Dutchmen and seven Chinamen being killed.

Printed in Great Britain by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh